

# Fred Slavick

*July 2, 1923 — August 5, 1999*

Fred Slavick joined the faculty of Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations in Fall 1953, following study for the Ph.D. degree in Economics at Princeton University and employment there as a Research Assistant in the Industrial Relations Section and as a Teaching Assistant in its Department of Economics. Except for two years at the Bureau of Labor and Management at Iowa State, Fred served Cornell until his retirement in 1978.

Fred was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and was educated in its public schools until he entered the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Like many of his generation, his undergraduate education was interrupted by military service during World War II. After special training at Kenyon College and in England as an interpreter of German, he served in that capacity in prisoner-of-war camps in France.

After discharge from the U.S. Army, Fred returned to the Madison campus to complete his B.A. degree in 1946 and an M.A. degree in 1947. There as a Graduate Assistant, Fred studied with Professor Edwin Witte, one of the leading scholars in the field of social insurance and one of the architects of the Social Security Act. That influence continued at Princeton where he matriculated for his Ph.D. degree in Economics, serving as a Teaching and Research Assistant to J. Douglas Brown, also a major figure in the legislative development of the Social Security Act. Fred received his Doctorate from Princeton in 1953, with a dissertation on disability and medical care insurance through collective bargaining. He joined the ILR faculty in that year as a Research Associate, and was promoted to Assistant Professor in the following year. He became an Associate Professor in 1960, and received his promotion to full Professor in 1966.

Fred's teaching and research from his student days onward were consistently in the field of income security and protective social legislation. During his tenure at Cornell, his research in that field ranged broadly, though perhaps with most emphasis on aging and retirement policy. Fred's approach to issues in the field invariably was to test the validity of the underlying policy assumptions. For example, in his monograph on retirement policies (*Compulsory and Voluntary Retirement in the American Economy*, 1966), he exposed the heterogeneity in the provisions of formal pension plans, whether unilateral or collectively bargained. In another study of eligibility for unemployment insurance of voluntary quits, Fred's research challenged the inflexibility of the prevailing policy of disqualification in most state plans. Other important research efforts included an assessment of unemployment insurance under prolonged economic recession, and a study of the employment problems of older workers.

Both as teacher and a “citizen” of the academic community, Fred cheerfully fulfilled his obligations with distinction. He was admired for the quality and content of his course offerings, and respected for the rigor and impartiality of the performance standards he expected from his students.

No less important in his life than his devotion to professional interests was music. Trained as a boy on the violin, later switching to the viola, Fred’s capability on the instrument and his knowledge of the string quartet repertoire well exceeded that of most amateur and even some professional musicians. His friend, Professor John Hsu of Cornell’s Department of Music, told us that “(Fred). . . reached such a high level of proficiency that he was able to play all the great works in the string quartet repertoire.” After his return to Milwaukee at retirement, Fred played regularly in several string quartets and quintets. There and during his travels abroad to Great Britain and Israel, playing music and attending concerts was often his principal interest. These activities brought him great happiness.

During the last several years of his life, Fred was afflicted by Alzheimer’s disease. His devoted brother, Monroe Slavick and sister-in-law, Florence, cared for him during these last years. He died in Milwaukee on August 5, 1999 at the age of 76.

*Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Duncan M. MacIntyre, Robert L. Aronson*