



## **Paul R. Eberts**

January 28, 1932 – June 23, 2016

Paul R. Eberts, Professor Emeritus of Development Sociology, died on June 23, 2016 at his home in Issaquah, Washington. Born in Wheeling, West Virginia on January 28, 1932 a “child of the Depression” that through dedication, clear vision and an amiable personality rose to prominence in our profession. Professor Eberts had a long and fruitful career at Cornell, joining the faculty in 1965 after graduating from Heidelberg College (B.A), Yale (B.D.), and University of Michigan (M.A. & Ph.D). He taught courses in Social Theory, Stratification, Social Change, Community and Regional Sociology, Social Policy and Research Methods until his retirement January 2, 2008.

Professor Eberts research focus was primarily on rural community development, presenting papers at conferences for over 40 years. Professor Eberts research was both theoretical and applied. He was an advocate of holistic system level models that were empirically operationalized. He was very much influenced by de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America. At the same time his background in divinity training anchored his concern with improving man’s conditions. This formed his lifelong commitment to democracy and citizen governance. His research dealt with issues faced by leaders in counties, towns and communities who desired to bring about change in life quality and well-being of their citizens.

Perhaps his greatest contributions were in the areas of applied sociology or outreach. He helped found the Community and Rural Development Institute (CaRDI) and served as its director for many years. He created a database of social indicators used by many planners and community leaders in economic development, planning social well-being and life quality. At the request of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources he wrote a book with his colleague, Kris Mershrod, on socioeconomic

trends and well-being indicators. He initiated an annual Social Trends and Outlook Conference that ran for over 10 years. Professor Eberts was an enduring and enthusiastic model of putting theory into practice engaging with local groups across New York and encouraged his students to participate. A good example of this was his project on Fiscal Austerity and its Consequences in Local Governments.

Well respected by his faculty colleagues, Professor Eberts was loved by his graduate students who felt he was always supportive and encouraging of their theoretical and research endeavors. A mentor to over 75 students as either chair of their master's or Ph.D. committee, he perceived as a good listener to their questions, who consistently made helpful comments on their work. They especially appreciated that he encouraged his graduate students to address community and rural development issues both nationally and internationally. He engaged undergraduates to likewise work to bring sociological theory into their everyday life.

Paul Eberts was also a great colleague who united people at work and at play. He was a founding member of the Rural Sociology Equivalents softball team. In order to beat younger teams with more muscle and brawn, the Equivalents used the department mantra of "solidarity" to win. It was often Paul's calming voice that kept the team settled and ready to field the next pitch and hopefully to carry the game. It worked, too, and Paul was always a big part of this summertime fun. That was the kind of man he was—a fellow colleague, inspirer, mentor, and friend.

Professor Eberts is survived by his wife, Helene Moran Eberts, who was his partner for nearly 40 years. He is also survived by his former wife Ellie of Rochester, New York, his brother Harry of Kalamazoo, Michigan, his step-daughter Amy Vigorita, and granddaughter Calliope.

*Associate Professor Joe Douglas Francis, with Emeritus Professor Eugene Curtis Erickson and Dr. Cornelia Flora*