1/15/2022

The profession of business and economic history lost one of its most respected, admired, and beloved scholars when Paul J. Miranti, Jr. passed away in January as a result of a Covid-19 infection. Paul was a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, where he received a BA in history (1965) and then entered the school’s graduate program. His graduate director at that time was Alfred D. Chandler. Paul finished his course work, received an MA (1968), and started a dissertation. Then, however, he had some serious doubts about a career in history. He left the Hopkins program and later entered the Graduate School of Business Administration at New York University, where he received an MBA in Accounting in 1974 and an Advanced Professional Certificate in International Finance (1979). In 1981, he joined the business school faculty at Rutgers University, where he advanced to a professorship and for a time served as an Associate Dean for Faculty and Research.

While he was happy and successful teaching accounting, he decided that accountancy lacked a proper history, and he reentered the history program at Johns Hopkins. By this time, Chandler had moved to the Harvard Business School and I had taken his place at Hopkins. I was pleased to direct Paul’s work on a thesis that he completed in 1985. His study – “From Conflict to Consensus: The American Institute of Accountants and the Professionalization of Public Accountancy, 1886-1940” – was based on a thorough and detailed knowledge of the work accountants do and the manner in which their jobs fitted in the business and economic context of a nation just becoming the leading industrial power in the world. As Paul pointed out, immigrants played an important role in this era of rapid business, political, and social change. The University of North Carolina Press published his revised dissertation as a prize-winning book on Accountancy Comes of Age in 1990.

Now on a tenure track at Rutgers, Paul followed this first book with a steady stream of academic articles, books (both edited and authored), reviews, and contributions to professional programs in both history and accountancy. His explorations of the Bell System’s history were particularly important, as was his History of Corporate Finance (co-authored with Jonathan B. Baskin). When he died, Paul was working on two books and four more articles with various co-authors.

Paul was gregarious, friendly, and loyal. His students said he was a tough grader but they appreciated (as all of us did) his lively sense of humor. We will all miss him, as will his family, which lost Paul and one of his brothers to the same disease in 2022.

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