

In Memoriam

Dr. George Anthony Spiva, Jr., professor emeritus of economics, passed away on Friday, July 19, 2013. He was 85.

What made Tony Spiva truly remarkable was his ability, energy, and devotion for bringing economics to an astounding number of people. Many faculty in the College of Business Administration have had the experience of running into an alumnus, no matter how old, who would immediately and proudly report that they learned economics from Dr. Spiva. He was a legend.



During his career he taught literally tens of thousands of students, mostly in principles of economics. During a long interval in the 1960s and 70s most of this teaching was done via closed-circuit television, which led to an event no longer possible with today's technology. Video tapes of Dr. Spiva's lectures were available in the non-print section of the library, and students would use them to study. In the Fall of 1977 when Dr. Spiva had 1200 students in the class, so many of his students were using this library service that they completely crowded out the rest of the campus, and the library had to restrict viewing of the economics tapes to certain hours of the day to accommodate everyone else.

Dr. Spiva was not just a campus celebrity. He brought his show on the road, making speeches to community groups all over Tennessee and in other states, as well. In 1984 alone he gave 52 speeches and appeared 26 times on a local television station, the ABC affiliate WATE. During the 1980s the Maryville newspaper *The Daily Times* ran an economics feature under the remarkable tagline *Dr. Spiva Says*. Very few faculty members receive this kind of brand recognition. Not surprisingly, in 1986 the University of Tennessee designated Tony as the very first Phillip Moffitt Distinguished Scholar, a program endowed by the editor of *Esquire* to reward and honor faculty members who played a public service role in communicating the importance of economics. The following year Tony received the Alumni Award for Outstanding Teaching, which was the second time he had won a university-wide honor for his instructional activities.

Dr. Spiva also had a considerable presence worldwide. In 1959, just a year after receiving his Ph.D., Tony took a two-year leave of absence to work on a Ford Foundation project in Indonesia. As his host noted in a subsequent letter, Tony arrived in Indonesia without any formal instruction in the language, but in a short time was able both to lecture and write in Indonesian. In 1965 he departed on another two-year project, this time to Peru. He was a visiting professor at Deakin University in Australia in 1982, and a visiting fellow at the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research in 1985. Amazingly, while he was there his economic commentary made the front page of the *New Zealand Herald*. Even more amazingly, at age 78 he spent six months in Sichuan, China, lecturing on economics and meeting with local bankers and businessmen.

The Department of Economics hired Tony to be its development economist, but he did so much more. Besides his extensive travels abroad working with international agencies, he did much to internationalize the College of Business Administration. He recognized that the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) could serve as a role model for developing countries, and used his connections with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to bring teams from all over the world to tour the valley with him and learn lessons from TVA. His initiatives throughout the years prompted the college to adopt a more internationalized curriculum, and that continues to this day.

Dr. Spiva was born on January 11, 1928, in Joplin, Missouri. He earned his bachelor's degree in marketing at the University of Missouri in 1950 and his master's degree in economics there in 1951. He earned his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1958 with a dissertation entitled *Economic Development in Modern Greece: A Study of Institutional Resistance*. His first academic appointment was as an assistant professor of economics at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, beginning on September 1, 1958. He retired as a full professor in 1997, but continued to teach large classes of Principles of Economics. He taught his last course in the Fall 2012 semester.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Irene Spiva, and is survived by his three children, Howard Spiva of Atlanta, Nick Spiva of Nashville, and Leslie Spiva of Knoxville; his sister, Joy Cragin; his companion and close friend, Barbara Shea; and seven grandchildren. It was Tony's wish that he have his ashes buried during a private ceremony at the family gravesite in Joplin, Missouri. His family has also elected not to designate a charity for memorial contributions.