



Cornell University
ILR School

ILR Memory Book Series

From time to time, on-line memory books are made available on the web site of Cornell University's ILR School as a way for past students, colleagues, and friends to post their recollections of faculty and distinguished staff members. The occasion for the memory book may be the person's passing, or it may mark their retirement from active service to the school.

This series collects the comments left by visitors to these memory books.

Lawrence K. Williams

March 8, 1930 - February 3, 2005

Professor Lawrence K. Williams, 74, of 412 Highland Road, Ithaca, died Thursday, February 03, 2005, at Cayuga Medical Center. Born March 8, 1930 in Bellows Falls, VT, he was the son of the late Freeman G. and Frances Orth Williams, and husband of the late Jean Starliper Williams, who died in 1994.

In 1952, Professor Williams graduated cum laude from Tufts University. He received his Masters Degree in 1954 from the University Illinois. In 1960, he earned a PhD in psychology from the University of Michigan. Professor Williams served in the U.S. Army from 1954-56, and worked as a research psychologist. In 1961 he came to Cornell University as an assistant professor, and became a full professor in 1969. When he retired in 1999, his colleagues awarded him an emeritus professorship.

During his long career, Professor Williams served for a period as chairman of the Department of Organizational Behavior and for 25 years was the director of graduate studies for the school of Industrial and Labor Relations. He served on the committees of over 250 graduate students and was chairman for more than 70 students.

He was also one of the founders and directors of GOALS, a foundation to support under represented minority graduate students in Human Resources and Industrial Relations. Professor Williams was also a Fulbright scholar in Peru during 1967-72.



In Ithaca, he served on the board of directors of Ithaco, Inc. and was past commodore of the Ithaca Yacht Club. Professor Williams is survived by his cousins, Susan Smith of Williamsburg, VA, and Tom Orth of South Mountain, PA; as well as his companion and domestic partner, Professor Jeanne Mueller. In addition to his parents and wife, he was predeceased by his son Jeffrey Freeman Williams.

Friends may call from 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday, February 6, 2005, at the E.C. Wagner Funeral Home of Ithaca. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Heifer International at www.heifer.org, or the Sierra Club at www.sierraclub.org, or to the charity of one's choice.

— *The Ithaca Journal*

Visitors to the memory book for Lawrence Williams made the following comments between February 8, 2005 and June 10, 2005.

An amazing professor, a trusted confidant, and a great leader and coach. Larry, you'll be sorely missed.
- Michael, Seattle, Washington Feb 8 2005

I would see Prof. Williams daily on the third floor of Ives Hall and when I would ask him, how are you today, he would always respond with one word - adequate. I also enjoyed the many times he would stop into my office with a joke or just to chat for a moment. It was a pleasure to have known Professor Williams.

- Kathy Roberts, ILR/Dept. of Social Statistics Feb 9 2005

Larry's life was so much more than adequate - more like terrific, genuine, stellar. His sense of humor - hilarious. His mastery of lexicon - unmatched.

- Mike O'Hara ILR'88, Niskayuna, NY Feb 11 2005

I was lucky enough to work with Larry. And he would come visit me regularly, no matter where they moved my office in ILR. No matter how tough a day or bad a week we were having, Larry could always lighten our spirits. I am sure he will continue to roam the halls of Ives and spread his good spirit. We will feel him, rather than see him now. Fair and adequate, everyday.

- Mike O'Hara ILR'88, Niskayuna, NY Feb 11 2005

You are gone but not forgotten. Your spirit will always echo the halls of IVES. How jealous are we that you get to visit with God. Thanks for being such a great man.

- Dan Spino, Tempe, AZ Feb 14 2005

Having just visited with Professional Williams while back there for the annual career fair last October, I am deeply saddened and completely caught off guard by this sudden news. I've never quite had the same relationship with any other professor than the one I shared with Larry. To say he will leave a void in the vaulted halls of the ILR School would be an understatement. I can't imagine visiting again and not being able to stop in on him and enjoy his engaging presence. I will miss him dearly ... What a man!

- Kevin Gamble, Fort Collins, CO Feb 15 2005

Larry was one of the first professors I had as an MILR candidate in the fall of 1972. In 1974 he intervened to get me my last months graduate assistantship stipend for which I continue to be grateful. In every role, professor, mentor, colleague, he was helpful, resourceful, open, warm and funny. I will miss him greatly.

- Tom Quimby, Albany, NY Feb 17 2005

Larry was my "unofficial advisor". His OD class was enlightening and he knew how to bait our natural curiosity. As he said, ILR means "I love reading". There is a vibration in my being where the contributions of his class and teaching remains. Farewell.

- Jim Smith, Yonkers NY Feb 22 2005

Wow, I remember always bumping into this nice guy. One day, when we bumped into each other, he took the time to introduce himself. He was a nice person.

- Karleen, Queens Feb 25 2005

An unmistakable and unfortunate void now exists within the hallways of Ives and it will never be replaced. I sincerely hope that Professor Williams is remembered not as a long-tenured professor at Cornell, but more simply as a good human being. His genuine desire to build relationships with the students he taught and mentored, his unmatched pride and respect for the ILR School, and his lifelong commitment to his beloved profession have created some of ILR's most cherished legacies. On a campus

that often boasts about its sense of community, Professor Williams did more than his share of the work in building this spirit. The forty-plus years he dedicated to Cornell-ILR have made impressions that will last a lifetime. Oh yeah, one more thing...BAFA will never be the same...

- Cory Stern, New York City Feb 26 2005

Although I did not have the privilege to greeting you and speaking with you, please forgive me... I have read about you and ask that you lay in peace and harmony... and that your family, somehow, find peace... and tranquility in their lives... I lost my dad at age 6, to bone cancer - i have 3 siblings... I know what I pray for. Thank you. Scott R. Hernandez 21355 Hidden Pines Drive, Diamond Bar, CA 91765

- Scott R. Hernandez, Diamond Bar, CAL Mar 4 2005

My years at ILR were challenging in many respects, but the experience of being in Professor Williams' labor sociology class is one of my most cherished memories. I very much appreciated Larry Williams' wonderful sense of humor, as well as his obvious warmth and compassion. I've had brief opportunities to speak with him as an alumnus, most recently at the 2003 Reunion. It was always a pleasure to see his friendly face and to greet him, if only for a moment. I will miss him.

- David Gochman ILR'83, Washington, D.C. Mar 8 2005

Professor Williams was our garden expert and maintained the gardens at ILR for a long time. When he put his hoe down the gardens were never the same. He was so willing to share his knowledge. He will be missed.

- Fran Secord, Burdett, NY Mar 18 2005

I really enjoyed Dr. Williams class last semester. He had a great style and great excercises. I will never forget BaFa BaFa, and the fun we had learning about different cultures. I am so glad I had the opportunity to take a class from him.

- Pete Fisher, Ithaca Mar 29 2005

Larry Williams was my professor as a 17 year old freshman back in the late sixties. He became a trusted advisor when I mulled over the idea of getting my doctorate nearly two decades later. Larry gave me advice that was right on the mark. He pulled no punches, and gave the straight scoop on a wide variety of issues. He was also a very lovely man. He made Ives a nicer place to be. A few years ago I told him he was my model of a someone who fashioned a great retirement: work a few months - then head for the sunshine. He will be missed!

- Denise Gelberg, Ithaca, NY Apr 19 2005

Prof. Williams was the first person I worked for (Secy was out on medical leave) when I started at Cornell in 1977. As the years passed and I interacted with many faculty, I was convinced that he was the best example of a faculty person that was quite smart but never flaunted it and never tried to make others look small. That made him so very special to me. Later he interacted with our office through the Goals Program and I became aware of his great story telling skills whenever he joined our group for lunch. My experience at Cornell was made special because of my interactions with Prof. Williams. Even when he was hospitalized and we talked by phone, he was always in a good mood and always, always made me laugh. When I look at the ILR gardens, or the beautiful plant he sent me (the dish is as pretty as the plant!) during my illness in 2004, I'll think of him and how much he loved life. I'll always cherish the surprise phone call he made to me at home from Florida during my recovery to wish me well. He will never really be gone because he has a special place in my heart and in my secret memory chest with other special people in my life. The entire staff loved it when he would stop in our office and say: "I'm just checking in." We all loved him and we miss having him "checking in" with us; "We miss you, Young Man."

- Martha L. Smith, 101 Juniper Drive/Ithaca Apr 20 2005

Professor Williams could always make me smile! His kindness, sense of humor, and endless array of stories will be sorely missed around the halls of ILR.

- Julie Sadler, Ithaca, NY Apr 29 2005

Professor Williams was one of the kindest, most approachable teachers I've known. He was a good listener with a gentle, easy going soul. Thank you for the advice and for posing the thought-provoking questions; especially for helping me understand myself better when it came to issues of change.

- Melissa Siebrecht, Ithaca, NY May 2 2005

The ILR School and Cornell University are less than they were when Professor Williams was developing the minds of students and maintaining the tradition that instructors at Cornell University are the finest. While he will be missed, we should be consoled in reflecting on the benefits that were Cornell's which he served so well.

- Paul Napier, Sherman Oaks, CA. May 3 2005

I always enjoyed running into Larry in the halls of ILR. He always had an interesting story to tell, a witty joke, or a thoughtful remark. I now pass on to my students many of the stories I had heard from him. It was far more than “adequate” and I feel honored to have known him.

- *Shaul Oreg, Haifa, Israel May 5 2005*

Over my 18 years at Cornell, Larry was my best friend. We swapped classes, did consulting together, and flew all over the country. He was a brilliant and intuitive diagnostician of organizational problems. He shepherded two of my ex-wives to a Ph.D., and helped hundreds of others to be the best they could be. R.I.P., Larry

- *Tom Lodahl, VA May 9 2005*

I am so saddened to hear of Larry’s passing. He was a wonderful man that was so full of life and wisdom. I only worked with him for a few years but always enjoyed running into him in the kitchen or the gardens. I was a part of the gardening group with Lee Adler and Larry often stopped to tell us about the plants he had planted and commend us on the work that we had done since he stopped. Even after I left ILR I would run into him at the Statler and he would have a story or joke that brightened my day. I also admired him for taking the time to attend commencement each year and honor the graduates. I know in the later years it was not an easy task for him to make that walk but he always did. These things are what made Larry a wonderful teacher and friend. Larry - you will surely be missed.

- *Laurie McEvoy, Cortland, NY May 9 2005*

Larry was one of the first senior members of the faculty outside of my own department with whom I dealt when I first came to ILR. While we had our disagreements at first, I came to respect him as an advisor and admire him as a human being. We’ll all miss him.

- *George Jakobson, Ithaca May 10 2005*

From Larry I first learned about the “soft underbelly of Cornell”. He also shared tips about gardens(he even shared his gardener!), recommendations on Alaska cruises, and fond memories of Peru, where we had each spent some time. Faculty meetings were always more entertaining when he was in the room! He was kind and generous, and I was better off for knowing him. His passing leaves a large hole in the ILR community.

- *Maria L. Cook, May 14 2005*

Larry Williams Memorial Statement I have many wonderful memories of Larry Williams as a friend and a colleague. As a friend, he was always there with a joke and a helping hand. As a colleague, however, I treasured his role as the ILR School's institutional memory. He was the person we all turned to for insights into our collective past and its lessons for our current troubles. Indeed, he represented the tail end of the first generation of ILR faculty and, because he remained actively involved in the school's life until the end, we all sought him out for his stories about how we used to do things and their implications for today's events. Many a story began with something like, "Oh God, we dealt with that back when so and so was dean; and here we are dealing with it again," which was always delivered with a chuckle. So, the last few months, I have wondered what Larry would have said about our search for a new dean. I can only imagine what story he might have told. But, I am certain of one thing. Whatever story he would have told would carry a clear message about the past, present, and future of this institution that he loved so dearly. It would be a message highlighting the strength and resiliency of the ILR School. And perhaps, that was his point all along: we are all part of something larger than ourselves and that we – individually and collectively – will endure as long as long as we remember our past. Larry, thanks for the memories. We'll pass them on. Bill Sonnenstuhl

- William Sonnenstuhl, Ithaca, New York May 16 2005

When you passed in the ILR halls or parking lot, Larry always took the time to stop and talk, to give an update on a class he was teaching, a trip he'd taken, or perhaps jsut a personal musing on life's bigger picture. HIs presence will be missed within ILR.

- Susanne Bruyere, Ithaca, New York May 24 2005

I first heard Larry's voice when he told me I was accepted to the MILR program. While at Cornell I was lucky enough to have him as a professor and a mentor. Always wise, always smiling, always a gentleman. Thanks for being part of my time in Ithaca, Larry.

- Alex Yaroslavsky, MILR'95, New York, NY May 25 2005

10 Lessons I Learned from Larry Williams By Samuel Bacharach 1. People's research reflects who they are. 2. If you can't put an idea on the small blackboard in his office, it is not a thesis. 3. Hockey is more than hockey. 4. ILR is more than a school. 5. Commitment to friends is an important part of healthy organizations. 6. Professors from Vermont drop by their colleagues' offices and never close their own door. 7. Generous academics share their ideas. 8. Teaching and students are everything. 9. You can always start again. 10. Friendship may weaken for a while but true friendship never dissipates. Thank you, Larry.

- Samuel Bacharach, New York, NY May 27 2005

Larry is the one who signed my acceptance letter into the Cornell ILR program and for that, I will be forever grateful. He was a kind man and will be missed.

- John Claus, Lancaster, PA May 31 2005

As a non-traditional student I received great support from Professor Williams. He enabled me to connect to the school and continue my career development in a way that schools with few non-traditional students do. I am grateful for the support and continue to see the results today. He will be missed.

- Devan Scott, North Carolina Jun 9 2005

Larry, Thank you for time and effort that you spent with my two sons both in and out of MILR and MPS classes. They often talked positively about your influence on their careers and the lasting friendship that was formed during their time at ILR.

- Allan Lentini, Ithaca NY Jun 10 2005