

## **A founder of the Regional Science Association, Charles Leven, has died**

On March 15, 2011 the regional science community lost a provocative, curious and playful mind as well as a dear friend and teacher with the death of Charles Leven. A founding member and past president (1964-65) of the Regional Science Association, Charlie's impact on the variety of disciplines that come together under the heading of Regional Science was significant and it is worth pausing to reflect on those contributions and the nature of the man who made them.

Charlie was born in Chicago in May 1928. After service in the Navy in 1945-46, he pursued his undergraduate education at Illinois Institute of Technology, University of Illinois and Northwestern University, graduating with honors in Mathematics from Northwestern in 1950. Charlie's interest in regional economics developed while working as a research assistant, and then as an economist, for the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank from 1949. He began his graduate study part time taking courses with support from the Bank and pursuing research ideas that interested him and were relevant for his work. Using the data and computing resources of the Bank, Charlie examined the patterns of commodity production, consumption and shipment for several commodity groups for counties in the US. He used the Bank's computing resources to calculate the transport cost minimizing pattern of shipments needed to support the observed levels of production and consumption, and then compared these cost-minimizing flows to the pattern of actual shipments to develop an index of competitiveness for the industries. This work motivated the development of a rigorous approach to regional income and product accounts, which became the focus of Charlie's dissertation research which was supervised by Robert Strotz and completed in 1958.

His first academic job was at Iowa State University where he was appointed in 1957, rapidly moving on to the fledgling regional science group at the University of Pennsylvania and then to the University of Pittsburgh. He made his definitive career move to Washington University, St. Louis in 1965, working there until 1991, and serving as Chair of the Economics Department from 1975 to 1980. Leaving Washington University was hardly retirement, however, since he held positions at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and other visiting positions too numerous to list until his final retirement in 2001. Even later, he was an active participant in regional science conferences around the world.

Charlie's work in clarifying ideas about measuring the economic base (Leven, 1956) and developing regional income product accounts for analysis and measurement of regional development (Leven, 1958 and 1961) were significant contributions to the early development of regional science. During a career of academic contributions exceeding 50 years, Charlie helped to illuminate and inform our discussion of urban renewal (Leven 1962), economic geography (Leven and Barr, 1972), regional growth and decline (Leven 1986), urban structure (Leven, 1991) and determinants of the quality of life in cities (Jensen and Leven, 1997). His edited 1978 book, *The Mature Metropolis*, was one of the first serious examinations of the emerging post-industrial city.

As a teacher and mentor, Charlie was remarkable. His lectures wavered between the technical and the anecdotal, and his students found that the anecdotes and stories he used to illustrate his ideas were not only funny and frequently memorable but reinforced the central message and, when most effective, transmitted the excitement and curiosity that were part of Charlie's essence.

Charlie Leven was a far more influential ambassador for regional science than is perhaps appreciated. His geniality and exuberance charmed those he encountered. His original mind and

constant curiosity motivated him to travel. He may have come from “small town” Chicago but his nature was that of a world citizen. He had a remarkable gift for making friends wherever he travelled and with an extraordinary range of people.

In 1965 he was a visitor to the Polish Academy of Science where he cooperated with Antoni Kuklinski, a founder of the field in Poland. With the fall of the Soviet bloc he returned as an advisor to the Polish Ministry of Planning and Construction working on the reform of Poland's local government system in 1989-91. There he met up with Tadeusz Markowski, later President of the Polish Regional Science Association and chair of the LOC for the 2009 ERSA Congress. Tadeusz's young colleague Maciej Turala was the secretary of that local organising committee. He is now Secretary of the European Regional Science Association. Thus the location of a European Congress and the person of ERSA's current secretary reveal the imprint of Charlie's hands.

While Chair of the Economics Department at Washington University, St Louis, Charlie was a keen supporter of their then tradition of inviting junior Brits as Visiting Professors. In 1975-76 Paul Cheshire was lucky enough to be one of them. This link brought Charlie to Europe in 1984-88 as an advisor to the first EU study on urban development in Western Europe. Friends he made during this study led him to academic visits in Madrid, Venice and Rotterdam as well as in its home base, Reading.

When in the UK in 1980 Charlie was musing about the price of a cup of coffee in Britain compared to the US. The price of coffee and capital was not so different; labour was cheaper. So why was a cup of coffee so comparatively expensive in Britain? Charlie concluded it must stem from the cost of urban land. This led to a funded research project on the economic effects of land use planning, based at Reading and to which Charlie was an advisor; and the recruiting agent for Stephen Sheppard.

In 1991 the first European M.Sc. in Regional Science was established at the University of Reading. Charlie was a distinguished visiting Professor teaching on this programme and came to influence a young generation of European scholars as well as young faculty at Reading at that time, such as Phil McCann. While visiting at Reading, the Berlin wall fell and he also met Daniela Constantin, able to visit from Romania. This, too, led to Charlie travelling on more ambassadorial work. He was one of the supports for Daniela in setting up the now flourishing Romanian Regional Science section.

Charlie's infectious good humour and entire absence of malice was extraordinary. He had an extravert sense of fun, an absence of pomposity or self importance and incredible generosity of spirit. That, as much as his intellectual contribution, was why he was such an effective ambassador for Regional Science. It is also why he was such a good friend and will be so personally missed, by so many.

Scholars interested in Charlie's work can consult the collection of the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming. All his papers, correspondence, scientific notes and draft papers have been routinely collected there and the Center now has 291 boxes of "Leveniana". A link to the basic record in their catalog is at: <http://uwcatalog.uwyo.edu/record=b2136323~S3> .

#### References to selected papers of Charles Leven

Measuring the economic base, *Papers of the Regional Science Association*, 2, 1956.

A theory of regional social accounting, *Papers of the Regional Science Association*, 4, 1958.

Regional income and product accounts: Construction and application, in *Design of Regional Accounts*, W. Hochwald (ed), Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1961; reprinted in *Regional Economics*, L. Needleman (ed), Penguin Books, London, 1968.

An economist looks at urban renewal, *Journal of Housing*, 1962.

The spatial dimension of the economy as a social outcome: some theoretical and empirical issues (with J.L. Barr) in *Spatial, Regional and Population Economics*, M. Perlman, C.L. Leven, and B. Chintz (eds), Gordon and Breach, New York and London, 1972.

*The Mature Metropolis* (ed), D.C. Heath, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1978.

Analysis and policy implications of regional decline, *American Economic Review*, 1986.

Distance, space and the organization of urban life, *Urban Studies*, 1991.

Quality of life in central cities and suburbs (with M. Jensen), *The Annals of Regional Science*, 31, 1997