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Milton Friedman, R.I.P.

by Jacob G. Hornberger

I will leave it to others to remind people of the enormous contributions that Milton Friedman, who died yesterday, made to economics and liberty during his long life. I thought instead that I would relate three times that my life intersected with Friedman, all of which were big personal highlights for me.

In 1988, when I was serving as program director at The Foundation for Economic Education, I attended a Mont Pelerin Society meeting in Indianapolis. At an evening outdoor barbecue, I just happened to bump into Friedman and introduced myself. He spent the next 20 minutes or so talking with me as if he and I were equals. In fact, if I hadn't known differently, I would have never known he was a Nobel Prize winning economist or even that he was a major intellectual force in the world of economics. He displayed absolutely no pretentiousness whatsoever, talked just like an ordinary person, and treated me like I was a very important person. I'll never forget that experience.

A few years later, Friedman provided me with another personal highlight in my life. I was attending a Cato Institute conference in Mexico City, when Friedman and his wife Rose happened to enter the hotel elevator at the same time as I. Only the three of us were in the elevator. I said to him, "Professor Friedman, my name is Jacob Hornberger. We met a few years ago at the Mont Pelerin Society meeting in Indianapolis and I am now president of a new organization called The Future of Freedom Foundation. It is very nice to see you again."

He got a big smile on his face, turned to his wife, and said in a rather excited voice. "Rose, Rose — this is the man who publishes the little calendar book with the essays in it." He was referring to *Freedom Daily*. I floated out of that elevator!

In September 1990, the first year in which *Freedom Daily* was published, I wrote an article entitled "[Letting Go of Socialism](#)," in which I criticized the socialism of public schooling and school vouchers. In a speech delivered to a conference, which was later reprinted in *Liberty* magazine, Friedman criticized my article! Taking Ludwig von Mises and Ayn Rand to task for being too uncompromising, Friedman put me in that same uncompromising category. Now, that

was criticism that I could live with! Moreover, Friedman said in the article that The Future of Freedom Foundation was “doing good work and having an impact.”

Friedman had a big impact on my intellectual development as a libertarian and he also provided me with three great highlights in my life. I shall always be grateful to him.

Jacob Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.

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