

MILTON FRIEDMAN

A free-market guru with ties to Portland

A great champion of human liberty died Thursday at the age of 94. Milton Friedman won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1976, but he likely will be remembered more for his passionate devotion to individual freedom.

Friedman's connection to Oregon was through his devoted wife, Rose, a member of the Director family. He was born in New York City in 1912, the son of poor Eastern European immigrants. She emigrated with her family from Eastern Europe to Portland in 1913. Rose attended public schools and Reed College before transferring to the University of Chicago. Rose and Milton met as graduate students at Chicago and the rest, as they say, is history.

They raised two children together and co-wrote three books on economics and public policy: "Capitalism and Freedom," "Free to Choose" and "Tyranny of the Status Quo." Rose also helped produce the 10-part PBS television series, "Free to Choose," which introduced the power of free-market economic ideas to the general public here and around the world beginning in 1980. They published their memoirs, "Milton and Rose D. Friedman, Two Lucky People" in 1998. Milton started his career as a young economist in the 1930s working for the New Deal Roosevelt administration in Washington, D.C. He worked in the U.S. Treasury Department during World War II before leaving government for teaching.

Friedman came to realize that government controls over prices, wages and production were both inefficient and violations of liberty. He described himself as "thoroughly Keynesian" back then but later said, "You know, it's a mystery as to why people think Roosevelt's policies pulled us out of the Depression. The problem was that you had unemployed machines and unemployed people. How do you get them together by forming in-

dustrial cartels and keeping prices and wages up?"

More than perhaps any other modern economist, Friedman's ideas were credited by Western leaders, such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and free-market revolutionaries in formerly communist countries as a driving force behind their efforts.

Milton Friedman called himself both radical and libertarian. He was an early and strong advocate of abolishing the military draft, and he saw more harm than good in government's attempts to outlaw peaceful human behavior such as drug use and prostitution.

Of all the ideas he advocated, none was more important to him than universal school choice, a concept he first wrote about in 1955. He and Rose founded the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation to advocate for public

and private school choice.

I first met Milton and Rose when they attended the Ashland Shakespeare Festival in 1989. Just this past Monday I thought about what Milton would have said in response to a front page story in The Oregonian about how many citizen initiatives aimed at limiting the power of government had failed in the recent election.

The headline read, "Voters nip libertarian dreams across U.S." If Milton had seen that, I think he would have responded, "It was the tactics that didn't succeed in this election. The dreams, which are really American Dreams, live on."

Milton Friedman, lover of liberty, is gone. But his dreams, the dreams of countless people here and around the world, live on.



STEVE BUCKSTEIN

IN MY OPINION

Steve Buckstein is senior policy analyst and founder of Cascade Policy Institute, a free-market think tank based in Portland.