

*At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on December 10, 2002,  
the following tribute to the life and service of the late Zvi Griliches  
was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.*

## **ZVI GRILICHES**

BORN: September 12, 1930

DIED: November 4, 1999

Zvi Griliches was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, on September 12, 1930, and died in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on November 4, 1999. He was a member of Harvard's economics faculty from 1969, and served at the time of his death as the Paul M. Warburg Professor of Economics. Griliches was one of the most influential empirical economists that the profession has ever had, and a scholar whose life and career touched many fields of economics and spawned generations of devoted students.

Griliches was a survivor of the Holocaust and wrote a moving personal account of his experiences, "Remembering," based on a talk he gave to the Harvard Hillel. "My parents were well-educated, well-to-do, and reasonably assimilated," he recalled. "We spoke Russian at home." When he was 10 years old, the Soviet Union invaded Lithuania. "My mother's family's tobacco factory was nationalized," he continued, "so we started on a new life."

On June 22, 1941, the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. Griliches went on to say, "In August we were put in the Ghetto. The Ghetto was started with about 30,000 people. . . . Towards the summer of 1944 . . . we were evacuated from the Ghetto towards Germany. At the time of the evacuation there were only 8,000 people left out of about 30,000. We traveled in cattle cars with lots of people per car."

"In Stutthof (near Danzig, now Gdansk)," Griliches continued, "the men were separated from the women. That was the last I saw of my mother. Then after about three or four weeks there, we were put on a train and went to a camp that was a branch of Dachau. . . . My father died there in January of '45. Towards the end of April, the Americans were advancing, and we were evacuated from our camp to Dachau. From there we went on a march toward the Alps, where I was liberated by the American Army on May 2nd of 1945."

After the war Griliches spent two years in Munich, joining a Zionist youth group, Hashomer Hazair, and ultimately sailing by illegal ship to Palestine, where he was captured

by the British and interned on Cyprus for seven months. He arrived in Palestine in September 1947 and served briefly in the pre-state Israeli army. He learned Hebrew, worked on a kibbutz, and prepared himself for the *bagrut*, the national high school equivalency exam. “I spent about six months trying to catch up on the ten years of school that I had missed,” he explained.

He enrolled for a year in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as a student in history. Griliches’ sister and uncle also survived the war, and emigrated to the United States. “I had an incentive to go see them and to go study,” he recalled, “So I applied to Berkeley and actually got in.” He received a scholarship and enrolled as a student in agricultural economics in 1951, completed a bachelor’s degree in two years and a master’s in one year, and met and married his wife, Diane Asseo Griliches, with whom he later had two children, Eve and Marc.

In 1954 Griliches enrolled at the University of Chicago as a graduate student in economics. He was appointed Assistant Professor of Economics two years later in 1956 and received his Ph.D. in 1957. Griliches became an American citizen in 1959. He rose through the ranks to serve as Professor of Economics from 1964 until 1969. In 1965 he was awarded the prestigious John Bates Clark Medal of the American Economic Association, awarded every two years to “that economist under the age of forty who is adjudged to have made a significant contribution to economic thought and knowledge.”

In 1969 Griliches brought his unique combination of Chicago economics and practical wisdom to Harvard, where he continued to make important contributions to economics and to inspire generations of loyal students. Among numerous honors, Griliches was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences and served as President of the American Economic Association and the Econometric Society.

Griliches entered graduate school at Chicago at the time the exciting new world of empirical measurement and computerized analysis of data was being discovered in economics. He became one of the pioneers.

His studies included the importance of economic incentives in the diffusion of knowledge, the extremely high rates of return emanating from public research and educational facilities, the importance of innovation and changes in input quality for assessing productivity, and the need for quality adjustment in price indices. Griliches’ work provided empirical foundations for several sub-fields of modern economics. These include growth theory, productivity measurement and analysis, price index numbers, and the economics of education.

At both Chicago and Harvard, Griliches trained outstanding students. He always had time for them – to discuss esoteric issues in econometrics, but also their personal ambitions and

problems. Despite his extraordinary accomplishments, he never seemed to be in a rush. He always had a word of wisdom and encouragement, and often a wise story from the old country, for his colleagues, his students, his friends.

In his later years, Griliches became interested in the genealogy of his family, and in numismatics. The two interests were intertwined, since two of his ancestors, a great uncle and his son, Avenir and Avraam Griliches, engraved medals in the St. Petersburg Mint between 1871 and 1912. He published an article about the Griliches engravers in the *Journal of the Russian Numismatic Society* in 1998, and donated some of the Griliches medals to the Jewish Museum in New York City. His work in genealogy also enabled him to connect with members of the Griliches family around the world—a pursuit he cherished in his later years.

He is survived by his wife, Diane of Cambridge, his daughter, Eve of Charlestown, and his son, Marc of Brookline.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dale W. Jorgenson  
Ariel Pakes  
Andrei Shleifer, Chair