

## The Early Days

**Eric J. Solberg**

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John Virgo and I were classmates, both as undergraduate and graduate students. John earned a B.A. in economics in 1967 and an M.A. in economics in 1969 from California State Fullerton. I received a B.A. in business administration with a concentration in economics in 1968 and a M.A. in economics in 1969, also from CSUF. We were then both accepted into the doctoral program in economics at the Claremont Graduate School, now called Claremont Graduate University. We were both primarily interested in labor economics. John was awarded a Ph.D. in 1972, but I finished in 1974. How did he finish so fast?

Aside from being an expert in mnemonics and speed reading, John was exceptionally focused and was an accomplished planner. Those traits would serve him his entire professional career. In the early days as an undergraduate, John had an interest in labor economics—particularly labor immigration. Whenever he was required to write a class paper, John would choose a topic related to immigration. He wrote papers on the migrant worker program in California and on illegal manpower flows. And lo and behold, when he passed the doctoral qualifying exams, he submitted his dissertation, supervised by Professor Paul Sultan, a few days later. John had been working on aspects of his thesis for years. He knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish early on. I would call that extraordinary planning and focus.

We lost close touch with each other after graduate school. I took a job as Director of the Manpower division of the Illinois Institute for Social Policy, a think tank created by the governor housed within the Illinois Department of Welfare. I lost that job after one year when a new governor took office, and I was fortunate to be offered a position as Assistant Professor of Quantitative Methods at CSUF. John took a position as Assistant Professor of Economics at Virginia Commonwealth University. In 1975, he moved to Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, where he stayed until he retired in 2005.

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John accomplished a great deal over the span of time from the early days on. He published several books, monographs, and journal articles, and he also made numerous paper presentations. The topics addressed in this body of work included the economics of immigration, manpower planning, health care, and a host of other eclectic topics. However, John's most enduring legacy will surely be the establishment and nurturing of the International Atlantic Economic Society and its journals. From the early days to the end, John knew what he wanted to accomplish, and his planning, organizational skills, and focus proved to be a successful formula. We can all learn from his example. He will be missed.