

Introduction of Henry Farber

As you all know, the Friday luncheon lecture at SOLE is named in honor of Al Rees, one of the founders of modern labor economics, who spent a large part of his career at Princeton.

Today, it is my great pleasure to introduce Henry Farber, the Hughes-Rogers Professor of Economics at Princeton to deliver that lecture.

This is particularly poignant because, after careful research, I have confirmed that Hank is the first Al Rees student to give the Rees lecture.

I have known Hank almost all of my professional career. We met when I was an assistant professor at Princeton. That was the start of a long, very rewarding friendship--both personal and professional.

Hank embodies the spirit of the Princeton Industrial Relations Section in many ways. His students are everywhere (including as the current President of this Society). And I know that he learned many mentoring skills from Al Rees and Orley Ashenfelter. But it turns out that it was also Douglas Brown, the first Director of the IR Section, who gave Hank an important first lesson in how to train graduate students.

Many of you know that Hank's doctoral thesis was on the United Mine Workers (that's a labor union for the benefit of those who entered the profession in the last two decades). When Doug Brown discovered this, he insisted that Hank tour a working mine before he continued his research.

Hank dutifully wrote U.S. Steel, which operated coal mines in the 1970s, and was told "if we gave tours to everyone who wanted a tour, we would never be able to mine coal."

Hank showed this letter (actual snail mail) to Doug Brown. Doug then wrote a letter to the President of U.S. Steel, invoking the names a number of earlier Presidents who had been supporters of the IR Section. The next thing he knew, Hank had a tour, conducted by a U.S. Steel Vice-president, of the New Dilworth mine near Uniontown, PA.

That's how you make sure your students know what they're talking about.

I think we may see more of this approach in today's talk. Please join me in welcoming Hank Farber who will tell us "Why you can't find a taxi in the rain and other labor-supply lessons from cab drivers."