

Remarks: Dr. Morris Slavin Retirement Dinner - June 5, 1981.

About 25 yrs. ago, when I was an undergraduate history student at this institution, one of my friends told me; "If you want a great course in the French Revolution, take Prof. Slavin. Besides, if you survive ~~him~~, you will be ready for anything." I loved challenges and decided to enroll in this formidable sounding class. - Thus began my quarter century association with Morris Slavin. - The night he walked into that French Revolution classroom, we all knew that we were in the presence of an extraordinary man. Even his appearance was awe inspiring. Morris in those days often wore an <sup>elegant</sup> hombourg on his head. You know that not everybody can wear a hombourg. You have to have a distinguished bearing in order not to look ridiculous. Prof. Slavin wore his hat with greater comfort than Louis XVI his crown.

My friend who had recommended the course to me was right. It was one of the finest classes I ever had. Not only was Prof. Slavin always prepared, he had something significant to say in each session. Even more important, however, was his ability to arouse in his students an understanding and appreciation of great ideas, <sup>We talked</sup> (about liberty, social consciousness, economic justice, a concern for the human condition. He left us with a great legacy!

At that time Morris was still a graduate student and taught at YU only as an Adjunct Professor. <sup>He was busy teaching at Wilson, commuting to Western Reserve, writing his dissertation. Yet</sup> He imposed the highest standards of excellence upon himself, before demanding it from his students. His was a difficult class, We sweated blood, but those of us who survived know our French Revolution, and were "ready for anything".

Morris was not only a great teacher but also a concerned human being. He was the first professor I ever had who invited his students to his home after the course was over. We often forget how a kind gesture of this type can do so much for a <sup>young person -</sup> student.

Years later when I returned to Youngstown as a faculty member, my formidable former professor easily became a dear friend and a much admired colleague.

Morris set a high standard for us in the Department <sup>of History</sup> to follow in the areas of scholarship and teaching. Prof. Slavin has brought ~~recognition~~ <sup>recognition</sup> to YSU on a national and international scale to a degree few others at this institution ever have. When colleagues at conferences ask where I teach and I say "YSU," the reaction is usually "Oh, that is where Morris Slavin is." You do not get this type of recognition unless you have made major contributions to your discipline, have read papers at regional, nation and international conferences, have written articles and book reviews in respected professional journals. Morris had done all this and more. It is also the sign of a great and decent human being that he shows genuine joy over the professional and scholarly success of his friends and colleagues. He is always <sup>above</sup> petiness and jealousy.

In the difficult times which descended upon the campus in the late 1960's and early 70's, Morris was a beacon of reason. This deep commitment to a better humanity led him to be in the forefront of the civil rights and anti-war movements. He spoke out with conviction even when the cause was still unpopular. Yet he never forgot that he was a member of a learned profession and acted accordingly. Unlike some academics who felt that

the way to reach young people was to have them call you by your first name, or dress like one of the grape pickers of Chavez, Morris Slavin used intellectual persuasion and an appeal to conscience as his weapons to fight for those causes which were so right. It was not with easy familiarity but with respect for his intellect that Morris brought permanent converts to his noble ideas.

As we entered a less formal age in the 70's, Morris who is always an example of sartorial splendor, did eventually buy a leisure suit, but it was the kind that you could almost wear with a hombourg.

Finally, Morris and Sophie must be commended for their <sup>great</sup> ~~interesting~~ parties and soireés. It is in the livingroom of the Slavins that we met most <sup>some of the best</sup> ~~of those~~ people in Youngstown, ~~who are worth knowing~~. Like the great <sup>R</sup>Parisian salons of the 17 and 18 centuries, the Slavin residence was and is filled with interesting people, often a curious mix of varied backgrounds, where the conversation is stimulating and the hospitality warm. Morris and Sophie, you have <sup>helped to</sup> ~~made~~ Youngstown <sup>livable</sup> ~~bearable~~! Not only are the Slavins interested in adults, <sup>but</sup> as you know they love children. Morris and Sophie have been surrogate grand parents to many of our <sup>kids,</sup> ~~children~~, shared our joys when they were well, worried, and I suspect even prayed, when they were ill. Sophie's chicken soup has restored many a sick child, and I know that my children would be ready to abjure their faith and convert to Judaism for one of her matzo-ball soups. <sup>Our joys, and divided our sorrows.</sup> Your friendship has <sup>multiplied</sup> ~~been invaluable~~.

Morris you are a "gentleman and a scholar" in the noblest sense of the word. We can apply Napoleon's verdict of Goethe to you, when he said "Voilà un homme" - Here is a real Man "a Mensch -