

For 49 years, Herb Pick was a scientist and mentor at U

July 05, 2012

Star Tribune:

For nearly half a century, graduate students arriving at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development often were greeted by an unassuming man who helped carry in their boxes.

As they settled in, the new students soon discovered that the nice old guy they mistook for a janitor was, in fact, the famous Prof. Herbert L. Pick Jr.

Or "Herb," as he preferred to be called.

"He was one of the best scientists and also one of the most humble guys you'd ever meet," said Megan Gunnar, director of the institute. "He packaged those two things together. He also was a fabulous teacher and mentor."

Pick, of St. Paul, died Monday, apparently of natural causes, while on his way to work. He was 82.

On the last day of his life, he did a most unusual thing, said his daughter Cindy Pick: He drove to work instead of riding his bike.

"He biked everywhere," she said. The professor and his bike were a familiar sight around campus, even in the winter months.

In the academic world, Pick is widely credited with creating a field of study called spatial cognition. It's the study of how adults and children think about space and how they reason about space, explained John Rieser, a psychology professor at Vanderbilt University who wrote many papers with Pick. "He did among the first studies with children on how they find their way around," Rieser said.

Pick excelled not only at research but also at teaching.

Read the whole story: [Star Tribune](#)