

MEMOIR

HERBERT WESTON HAYCOCKS

IN writing a memoir to Dale, Gunlake referred to the role of chance in the shaping of careers. Herbert Weston Haycocks, whose death on 19 January 1967 was a grave loss to the Institute, was a distinguished actuary and would have been outstanding in any environment but the chance movement of events that led him to the Actuarial Tuition Service allowed, as no other environment would have done, the full expression of his scholastic and didactic capacity.

Haycocks was born in Liverpool on 2 February 1908. He was educated at Liverpool Institute High School and was an outstanding scholar. On leaving school in 1926 he entered the service of the Royal Insurance Company in Liverpool and became an actuarial student, qualifying for the Fellowship in 1932. His intellectual interests were wide and a normal actuarial office life could not have satisfied him long. When the post of Secretary to the Actuarial Tuition Service became vacant in 1939 he must have seen the opportunity to satisfy his questing mind. He had already served for three years as a tutor, and he continued until the last to take an active part in teaching and in writing text-books and tutorial papers, especially those dealing with methods of mortality investigation in respect of which his insight was particularly acute. He seemed, however, to be master of all the subjects in the actuarial syllabus and he contributed original thought to all of them. His clear thinking and his sympathetic understanding of students' difficulties were evident in the way in which he taught and dealt with problems presented to him. He remained always a scholar himself. Having time on his hands in the early years of World War II, he studied for the B.Sc.(Econ.) at the London School of Economics and obtained a first-class degree. He was always an avid reader with very wide tastes. Later in the war he was seconded as a civilian to Fighter Command where he applied his knowledge of advanced statistics to operational research. In recent years he had lectured to students at the London School of Economics undertaking a special degree course as part of an arrangement for securing exemptions from the actuarial examinations. His capacity as a teacher quickly became highly respected by the University staff and his death came at a time when greater involvement in university activity was being contemplated.

In his history of the Students' Society, Menzler refers to the part played by Haycocks in arousing greater interest in the Institute in advanced statistical methods and especially to his joint paper to the Students' Society with W. G. Bailey entitled 'Are we scientists' which led to much controversy and as always—after an interval—to progress. He played an active part too in the formation of the Economics Study Group and took a leading role in the conduct of studies and discussions. Haycocks was one of a small group of younger Fellows who from 1943 began to hold lunch-time discussion on subjects of mutual interest. This group later became the Woolgatherer's Club and it became a rule that the subjects had to be non-actuarial. This kind of activity appealed strongly to Haycocks's temperament. He had been Chairman (for the second time) shortly before his last illness.

He wrote two text-books, one with W. G. Bailey on 'Some Theoretical aspects of Multiple Decrement Tables', in 1946, and the other with W. Perks on 'Mortality and other Investigations', Volume I, in 1955. At the time of his death he had written several chapters of the new book on mortality investigations which he and I were jointly preparing.

He wrote three important papers to the Institute (i) with W. G. Bailey 'A Synthesis of Methods of Deriving Measures of Decrement from Observed Data' submitted to the Institute in March 1946; (ii) with J. Plymen 'Investment Policy and Index Numbers' submitted to the Institute in April 1956; (iii) again with J. Plymen 'Design and application of the *F.T.*-Actuaries Index' submitted to the Institute in March 1964. The Institute awarded prizes for each of these papers. The second and third papers were also presented to the Faculty which awarded prizes for them. Such a record will be hard to match.

As a person he was respected and loved by actuaries all over the world who had passed through his hands as students, many of them without ever having seen or spoken to him. He was utterly devoted to his teaching work and was never too busy to deal personally with difficulties of individual students who came to him; and he commanded warm affection and a high order of loyalty from his staff because he was richly endowed with these qualities himself. To me Bert Haycocks was a close personal friend as well as a colleague. His major characteristic was kindness. I never knew him resent or accuse. If he caught anyone out in a mistake he made it sound like an accident. If he gave advice, it was after very careful consideration; he never demanded that it be accepted. He could argue fiercely in debate and smile in defeat.

Haycocks leaves a widow, Norah, who has many friends in the actuarial profession. Norah and he have been well known as bridge players of national championship class and it was a pity that in latter years his disability prevented him from playing in tournaments. He turned instead to music. He could be happy with a pianoforte and a volume of Chopin waltzes and he shortened long nights with a record player. He amassed a considerable collection of records of both classical and modern music.

The Institute has recognized his services to the profession by the posthumous award of the Silver Medal he would undoubtedly have received on ultimate retirement, and which, such was his modesty, would have occasioned him embarrassed surprise.

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