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# The Actuary

Editor . . . . . ANDREW C. WEBSTER Correspondence should be addressed:  
*The Actuary*  
 Associate Editors . . . COLIN E. JACK Mail Drop 13-2, 1740 Broadway  
 FREDERIC SELTZER New York, N. Y. 10019  
 JONATHAN L. WOOLEY Tel: (212) 586-4000

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## ON PLEASURE

"A man possesses nothing certainly save a brief loan of  
 his own body; and yet the body of man is capable of much  
 curious pleasure."  
*Branch Caball*

Pleasures may be physical, sensual or intellectual; there are also pleasures of  
 accomplishment and of society.

Of the physical pleasures, those of the bed and of the table are sometimes  
 called gross and even deemed sinful lusts, although it is apparent that the Creator  
 provided them for his own purposes. The sheer exuberance which comes from the  
 muscles, the joints and the digestion are in tone is another physical pleasure.

Sensual pleasures come from giving delight to one of our five senses, of touch,  
 hearing, sight, smell and taste. Their utility is open to question; is it of use to be  
 tickled?

Intellectual pleasures come from delighting the mind, from the contemplation  
 of the beautiful, the unusual, or the interesting.

These forms of pleasure may be combined. The refinement of the physical  
 pleasures by combining them with the sensual is a mark of civilization; the sensual  
 may indeed predominate. The savage tearing out of the liver of his victim has little  
 in common with the gourmet sitting down to a plate of *pâté de foie gras*.

Romantic love, which many think to be the epitome of human happiness, can  
 involve sensual and intellectual pleasures as well as those of society and achievement.  
 Music provides a blend of sensual and intellectual pleasure which is no doubt why  
 Dr. Johnson called it the only sensual pleasure without vice.

The idea that pleasure is vicious is widely held. Perhaps because experience  
 has shown that excess of pleasure can bring pain; perhaps because indulgence may  
 distract from toil. This view may be carried to extremes as by the Puritans of whom  
 Macauley said that "they hated bear-baiting; not because it gave pain to the bull,  
 but because it gave pleasure to the spectators."

The King of France had an officer in charge of his *menus plaisirs* (diversions).  
 Few of us could afford to do so but we should take care that our pleasures, like our  
 friendships and our fences, are kept in good repair. A rational man will seek to  
 maximize his pleasures, always taking care that he does not give pain to others and  
 indeed seeking to increase their pleasures too.

Actuaries are fortunate that in the exercise of their profession they may derive  
 not only intellectual pleasure but, in large measure, may enjoy the pleasures of ac-  
 hievement and of society. Their education fits them also to enjoy many extraneous  
 intellectual pleasures, particularly those of mathematics, which have delighted think-  
 ers from long before Euclid and Pythagoras.

Apart from the beauty which many find in mathematical theorems — for ex-  
 ample, in the conciseness of the proof that there is no largest prime, or in the  
 unexpected relationship  $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$ , pleasure may be found in puzzles and games  
 based on mathematical principles. It is therefore not surprising to find that an actu-  
 ary is a leading authority on bridge and other card games, as well as on backgam-  
 mon — and that another has written a book on mathematical diversions.

They deserve the commendation of their colleagues for having added to "the  
 public stock of harmless pleasures."  
 C.E.J.

## VITAL STATISTICS

Carl L. Erhardt and Joyce E. Berlin, editors,  
*Mortality and Morbidity in the United States*,  
 Vital and Health Statistics Monographs, Amer-  
 ican Public Health Association, Harvard Uni-  
 versity Press, 1974.

by Frederic Seltzer

The publication of this volume by Har-  
 vard University Press completes the  
 series of Vital and Health Statistics  
 Monographs initiated by the late Mort-  
 mer Spiegelman, FSA, in 1958. The  
 work was carried out in the offices of the  
 Metropolitan Life Insurance Company  
 until Mr. Spiegelman's retirement in De-  
 cember, 1966. He then devoted his full  
 time to the Monographs at the offices of  
 the American Public Health Association  
 until his untimely death in 1969. Dr.  
 Carl L. Erhardt completed the job.

This sixteenth volume in the series  
 analyzes mortality and morbidity trends  
 in the United States since the beginning  
 of the century, with particular attention  
 given to the 1960s. Data are presented  
 by age, sex, race, marital status, geo-  
 graphic region, and for various causes  
 of death and illness.

Other specialists provide coverage  
 of such subjects as health, illness, dis-  
 ability, and the use of medical service  
 by the aged; as well as projections of  
 health service personnel and facilities;  
 infant mortality; and variations in mor-  
 tality, morbidity, and health care by  
 marital status. International compari-  
 sons of mortality and longevity are also  
 presented. There are many tables and  
 figures, an extensive set of references,  
 and a detailed index.

Rapid change in the interval from  
 data collection to publication has di-  
 minished the value of some of the ma-  
 terial. However, a good deal of it has  
 not been published elsewhere nor is  
 there any comparable compilation with  
 such useful cross classifications.

The 15 volumes published earlier are  
 as follows:

*Accidents and Homicide* by Albert P. Is-  
 krant and Paul V. Joliet.

*Infectious Diseases* by Carl C. Dauer, Robert  
 F. Korns, and Leonard M. Schuman.

*Trends and Variations in Fertility in the  
 United States* by Clyde V. Kiser, Wilson H.  
 Grabill, and Arthur A. Campbell.

*Infant, Perinatal, Maternal, and Childhood  
 Mortality in the United States* by Sam Sha-  
 piro, Edward R. Schlesinger, and Robert E.  
 L. Nesbitt, Jr.

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**RESULTS OF COMPETITION No. 6**

asked for actuarial contributions on the U. S. Bicentennial theme and they came sailing in. It seems appropriate to start with a theme song, so here is E. Allen Arnold's symbolic "United States Forever":

$$\sum_{u=0}^{\infty} e_{u:s} = \infty$$

Paul Thomson joined the symbolists with a mortality table ending at age 200, "Ask a silly question and you get a silly answer.

$$\log \log 1/q_x = 3.505129 \log (200-x) - 7.293737"$$

Readers with desk calculators may while away the time looking for the values of  $q_x$  that equal .1776 and .1976.

We're delighted to see that Mr. Ralph Edwards, *The Actuary's* founding father, continues to contribute (at the Editor's expense), and he advises us he has not yet begun to compete:

Send *The Actuary* to all members of the International Actuarial Association so that Andrew Webster would be the Scot heard round the world. (Prize)

On July 4th have all consulting actuaries emigrate from ERISA to USA.

Have the results of the final Fellowship examination released on Independence Day.

Allan Weiner advises us to "Bicentennial and invest the difference" but we award him a copy of "American Journeys" for his proposed:

"Bill of Last Rites"

Also sounding a higher note, Michael Pikely suggests that August 15 be declared, "The Feast of the Actuarial Assumption." Mr. W. Paul McCrossan thinks a U. S. Specialty Examination would be appropriate, "reflecting the ecumenical spirit of the Society, the Chairman for this . . . should be a Canadian."

The ranks of competitors have been swelled by the addition of the newly eligible former Associate Editor, Pete Hutchings, whom we prize for his Actuarial Bicentennial Exhibit:

The Data Backing the American Experience Table (temporarily missing)

The First Actuarial Student to Attain Fellowship while Doing a

Total of Less Than 10 Days' Useful Work (1910)

The First Diversification Project: The Disability Rider to Ordinary Life Policies

The First Group Health Insurance Policy (1923)

The First Inadequate Group Health Claim Reserve (1923)

The First Recorded Loss in Group Health Insurance (1924)

The First Forecast of Social Security Bankruptcy (1936)

The First Level Premium Individual Major Medical Policy; With a Complete Set of All 38 Rate Increases Subsequently Requested, Along with the 3 Actually Approved

The Most Optimistic Forecast for Variable Life Insurance (1967)

The First Actuary to Admit Gross Misjudgment (may not be ready by July 4)

C. E.

**COMPETITION No. 7**

"I don't think there is any way to put together any regulation or law but what some ingenious actuary can find a way to beat it." This rough quote from a panel discussion at one of the last Society spring meetings prompts us to try a serious competition (seriously!). The subject under discussion was the Report of the Special Committee on Valuation and Nonforfeiture Laws (Unruh Report).

Assuming all the proposals in the Unruh Report are adopted in substance, you are challenged to design a product that either (a) requires grossly excessive minimum nonforfeiture values or (b) permits absurdly low values. Each category will be eligible for a prize which, in the absence of a suitable entry for one, will be awarded for the other. In the absence of a sufficiently grotesque design for either category, both prizes will be awarded to Henry Unruh.

The prizes will be tailored to the winning entries and each entrant will receive a variable life prospectus and a telephone call from an agent of the winner's company.

The usual rules apply. In recognition of the magnitude of the challenge and the summer doldrums, our deadline is September 15.

C. E.

**Social Security Note**

*Railroad Retirement Board, Annual Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1975.* U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, Chicago, Illinois, pp. 89.

This report is a summary of the activities of the railroad retirement and unemployment systems during fiscal year 1975.

Section I summarizes the significant legislative developments during the past fiscal year including the Railroad Retirement Act of 1974, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act Amendments of 1975, the 1975 amendments to the Railroad Retirement Tax Act, and other minor legislation.

Sections II, III, and IV discuss operations, administrative developments and legal rulings respectively under the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts. There is also an appendix which contains statistical data.

Copies of this report may be obtained free from the Railroad Retirement Board, 844 Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

**Vital Statistics**

(Continued from page 2)

*Tuberculosis* by Anthony M. Lowell, Lydia B. Edwards, and Carroll E. Palmer.

*The Epidemiology of Oral Health* by Walter J. Pelton, John B. Dunbar, Russell S. McMillan, Palmi Moller, and Albert E. Wolff.

*Syphilis and Other Venereal Diseases* by William J. Brown, James F. Donohue, Norman W. Axnick, Joseph H. Blount, Neal W. Ewen, and Oscar G. Jones.

*Marriage and Divorce: A Social and Economic Study* by Hugh Carter and Paul C. Glick.

*Digestive Diseases* by Albert I. Mendeloff and James P. Dunn.

*The Frequency of the Rheumatic Diseases* by Sidney Cobb.

*Cardiovascular Diseases in the United States* by Iwao M. Moriyama, Dean E. Krueger, and Jeremiah Stamler.

*Cancer in the United States* by Abraham M. Lilienfeld, Morton L. Levin, and Irving I. Kessler.

*Mental Disorders/Suicide* by Morton Kramer, Earl S. Pollack, Richard W. Redick, and Ben Z. Locke.

*Epidemiology of Neurologic and Sense Organ Disorders* by Leonard T. Kurland, John F. Kurtzke, and Irving D. Goldberg.

*Differential Mortality in the United States: A Study in Socio-economic Epidemiology* by Evelyn M. Kitagawa and Philip M. Hauser. □