



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# REMEMBERING BOB MYERS

By Warren R. Luckner

**R**obert J. Myers passed away at age 97 on Feb. 13, 2010. He is probably best known in the actuarial profession as one of the architects of the Old Age Survivors and Disability Insurance Program (OASDI), commonly referred to as Social Security, and for his lifelong dedication to OASDI. His accomplishments are legendary and well-documented. As noted in the obituary posted on the Society of Actuaries website (<http://www.soa.org/about/membership/2010-deceased-myers.aspx>), “Nearly every FSA alive today learned about Social Security by reading study notes and other material prepared by Myers.”

A few other highlights of Bob’s contributions as noted in the SOA obituary:

1. Involved with the U.S. Social Security Program for 75 years.
2. Authored more than 900 articles and several books on the Social Security program.
3. Founding member of the National Academy of Social Insurance.
4. Served as President of both the SOA and the American Academy of Actuaries simultaneously during 1971 – 72.

The rest of this article shares my personal perspective on Bob’s life and contributions. My experience interacting with Bob is but one example of his commitment to the actuarial profession, to society, and to his family, and of Bob’s influence on individual lives.

I first met Bob Myers in 1972 when he was serving a term on the Board of Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL), which was then the largest fraternal life insurance company. I was a new actuarial student at AAL and was introduced to Bob because I was to take on a project evaluating the impact of Social Security on the need for life insurance. Bob was, as usual, very generous with his time and wisdom. The project eventually led to a financial planning tool called Family Security Analysis (or F.S.A.)—pretty clever for a young actuarial student!



I again met Bob, through his writings, when I studied for the actuarial exam covering social insurance. This experience contributed significantly to my “philosophy” of actuarial work. He described the concepts of individual equity and social adequacy. I believe considering the appropriate balance between these concepts is particularly important to the actuarial profession in order to fulfill its responsibility to best serve the public interest.

I came to know Bob on a more personal level when I had the opportunity to work with him directly as he updated his classic textbook “Social Security” to a second edition early in the 1980s. Bob always focused on making sure the content was accurate, but he also welcomed suggestions for improving the readability of the text.

Later, Bob provided a thorough discussion of my paper “OASDI Earnings Test” published in *Transactions of Society of Actuaries*, Volume 34, 1982. Typical of Bob, his discussion was gracious, thorough and helpful in providing

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additional thinking on the pros and cons of the Earnings Test.

During my time as an SOA staff member I had many opportunities to see Bob at Society of Actuaries meetings. The last time I had the opportunity to visit with Bob in person was in 2001 when I was serving as a visiting faculty member at the University of Iowa and Bob was on campus as one of the recipients of the Alumni Fellow designation from the University of Iowa. Bob's financial generosity is evident at the University of Iowa as his contributions enabled the establishment of a computer lab for the Statistics and Actuarial Science Department. Perhaps the greatest professional tribute to Bob

and his contributions occurred in 1994 when the American Academy of Actuaries established the Robert J. Myers Public Service Award in recognition of his extraordinary lifelong public service. His professional life was truly "In the public interest."

On a personal level, he and his wife Rudy, who often accompanied him to professional meetings, modeled for all of us a loving relationship that lasted for 57 years.

I, along with countless others, am honored to have known Bob and to have benefited from his wisdom. His was truly a well-lived life of service to others. 🧑🏻‍🤝‍🧑🏻