



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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"BECOMING AN ACTUARY"

The Society's Committee on Minority Recruiting has produced an attractive 17-page brochure, *Becoming An Actuary: Room To Move Ahead*, explaining what an actuary does, how to become one, opportunities, and relevant accounts of people who have become actuaries. For a copy, ask the Society office.

SIGHTINGS

Colin E. Jack found in the novel "The Master of the Mill", by Frederick P. Grove (1871-1948):

"He also began to indulge in large-scale philanthropy. A special office in the Realty Building was in charge of an expert actuary. Mr. Clark must have spent millions in that way."

Mr. Jack finds it unclear whether the money was spent on the actuary or on the philanthropy.

Philip J. Bieluch responded by letter to *Frequent Flyer* magazine (and they printed his correction of the writer's notion of actuarial certainty) when he saw this in their September 1982 issue:

"With actuarial certainty (Lufthansa's) management determined that its on-time arrival and baggage handling records were good enough" (so they could safely offer a service guarantee program to their customers).

Paul E. Buell observed in Carl Sagan's *Broca's Brain* (which he recommends) use of "actuarial" as a synonym for "demographic":

"(It) is easy to calculate that if each American has (a compelling perception of an imminent disaster to a friend or relative) a few times in his lifetime, the actuarial statistics alone will produce a few apparent precognitive events somewhere in America each year . . . The hits are recorded, the misses are not."

John W. Paddon and Robert C. Tookey, on opposite edges of the continent, both found in a crossword puzzle (the same puzzle) a clue "Actuaries' honor: Abbr.", the solution in three letters being the appropriate one.

SOME VITAL STATISTICS—CANADA

Colin E. Jack and David S. Williams kindly responded to our appeal for Canadian data corresponding to the U.S. figures in our October 1982 issue. Here are the Canadian figures, obtained from official sources.

Table I. Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces Per 1,000 Population

Year	Births	Deaths	Marriages	Divorces
1972	15.9	7.4	9.2	1.5
1975	15.8	7.3	8.7	2.2
1978	15.3	7.2	7.9	2.4
1980*	15.5	7.2	8.0	2.6

*1981 figures not yet available

Table II. Motor-Vehicle Deaths

Year	Number of Deaths	Death Rates		
		Per 100,000 Population	Per 100 Million Vehicle Miles	Per 10,000 Motor Vehicles
1972	6,221	28.5	6.84	6.56
1977	5,253	22.6	4.57	4.19
1978	5,429	23.1	4.49	4.35
1979	5,863	24.8	4.66	4.70
1980	5,461	22.8	4.35	4.02

Not forgetting that the figures in Table I are crude rather than age-adjusted, it may be concluded that Canada has advantage over U.S.A. in lower death and divorce rates. As to Table II, the trends in death rates, though not the absolute values, are similar; Canada has laws requiring seat-belt use, but her reduction in maximum speed limit was not as sharp as in the U.S.A.

E.J.M.

John C. Angle sent us a sad epitaph from a stone in New York's Woodlawn Cemetery, though there's no reason to blame the episode on female actuaries:

"George Spencer, 1894-1909: Lost life by stab in falling on ink eraser, evading six young women trying to give him birthday kisses in office of Metropolitan Life Building."

Harry L. Sutton, Jr. retrieved an article in the Sun Newspapers of Edina, Minn., that our career encouragement people ought to put into their kits. It's about Pamela S. Woodley's progress to Fellowship, and her views on how worthwhile it all was.

John Donohue (LIMRA), a constant reader and occasional critic, sent us, from the Hartford Courant, this about a hapless basketball team:

"The Hawks lost an estimated \$3 million last season and had the charisma and glamour of an actuary convention."

Raymond B. Biondi and Harvey Sobel both found in a comic book, *Justice*

League of America (No. 210), a tale about aliens in outer space who are watching disasters take place on earth, as predicted by their actuary.

Jack E. Wood tells us that in a satirical article, "Yoga for Masochists", (*Atlantic Monthly*, Oct. 1982) this appears:

"But the truly enlightened Maso-yogi need not court hazard; there are ample opportunities to experience transcendental pain in daily life. . . . Among devotees, a feeling like boredom can be honed to the razor's edge of pain. So we see legions of Maso-yogis engaged in actuarial work, bus-conducting, and local government."

Raymond E. Sharp is undecided whether a comment in Joseph Weizenbaum's *Computer Power and Human Reason* should be taken as a compliment:

"Understanding something always means understanding it at a certain level. An actuary uses some fairly sophisticated mathematical tools whose fundamentals he almost certainly doesn't understand or care anything about." □