



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article From:

The Actuary

May 1983 – Volume No. 17, Issue No. 5

WRIGHTINGS

G. Graeme Cameron found the following description of the building of the trans-Canada railway in "Towards the Last Spike", by E. J. Pratt:

"Till now the axles justified their grease,
 Taught coal a lesson in economy
 All doubts here could be blanketed with facts,
 With phrases smooth as actuarial velvet."

Gregory R. Childs found two mentions of actuaries in short stories by Robert Heinlein. The first, from "Podkayne of Mars":

"(The) employee's earning power for . . . his working life . . . and his putative value to the Corporation, (were) all calculated by the company's actuaries who are widely known to have no hearts at all, just liquid helium pumps."

The second story, "Lifeline", involves a scientist who invents a machine that predicts the exact moment of any person's death. His clients refrain from buying life insurance until the last moment. His defense, when sued by a large insurance company:

"If to make predictions by methods of scientific accuracy is illegal, then . . . actuaries . . . have been guilty for years."

Dan A. Harbertson spotted an article in "The Idaho Statesman" about the new height-weight tables, that dubbed Fred-eric Seltzer:

"Metropolitan Life's actuarial guru who sculpted the new tables from tons of statistics."

Stuart A. Yarus's wife Joan found a question and answer column about actuarial careers in "The Dallas Morning News." Much of the column was a well presented description of the career by our Linda M. Delgadillo. My favorite actuarial reference was in the question itself:

"My mother, who is in the insurance business, says actuaries work hard but make a nice income."

J. Kenneth Wood sent us a novel, "The Ludi Victor", in which the hero is said to have a "lethal actuarial brain."

Donna R. and Martin R. Claire, while reading the Star Trek novel "Black Fire"

SGLI (SERVICEMEN'S GROUP LIFE INSURANCE) MORTALITY

Annual Death Rates per 1,000
 Calendar Years 1977-81

I. Active Duty Non-Vietnam Experience

Year	Years of Exposure	No. of Deaths	Death Rate
1977	2,140,912	2,600	1.21
1978	2,111,237	2,533	1.20
1979	2,081,250	2,404	1.16
1980	2,103,657	2,411	1.15
1981	2,124,610	2,394	1.13

II. 120 Days Post-Separation Experience

1977	185,087	505	2.73
1978	162,333	367	2.26
1979	175,018	365	2.09
1980	171,196	342	2.00
1981	157,935	317	2.01

(Corresponding figures for 1974-1976 were reported in this newsletter's December 1978 issue.)

Considerable detail by branch of service and age-groups is given in "Service-men's and Veterans Group Life Insurance Programs: Seventeenth Annual Report, Year Ending June 30, 1982", available from the VA Regional Office and Insurance Center, Philadelphia, PA 19101. □

A EUROPEAN ATTEMPT TO SYNTHESIZE NOTATION PROPOSALS

by Frank C. Reynolds

(This is Article No. 9 in a series).

At the end of 1974, seven European actuaries from four countries—including such leaders as Boehm, Engelfriet and Kool—set out to distill the numerous extant proposals. Their first step was to summarize the observed strengths and weaknesses of each, making incidentally an excellent reference for readers wishing to explore the notation controversy beyond the depth that this series can probe.

The unwieldiness of long parameter lists had become apparent, as had need for precision in defining movement from one status to another. These actuaries designed a parameter list structured into four portions, two before the main symbol and two after it. Thus,

$$T, i\%_{n|m} A_x^{(k)} \text{ becomes } (k) (n;m)a(x) (i;T)$$

$$(e.g. 58CSO, 10\%)$$

$$18|5 A_0^{(12)} \text{ becomes } (12) (18:5)a(0) (10\%;58CSO)$$

Problems with this format are how to dig out the principal symbol, and how to associate the parameters with the related symbols when several are juxtaposed. Also, no direct attention was given to achieving compatibility with the computer.

The European group deserves appreciation of its foresight and its helpfulness in keeping the debate going, but its proposals don't appear to offer a practical solution. □

by Sonni Cooper, noted a passage where Dr. McCoy is outlining for Captain Kirk what may have happened to Mr. Spock, who has disappeared with a sliver lodged near his spine:

"There are three possibilities: one, he's fine; odds . . . eighty or ninety to one—against. Two: . . . he's paralyzed. Odds: . . . eighty percent. Three: he's dead; probability . . .

twenty percent. All this is conjecture, Jim . . . I'm a doctor, not an actuary!"

Michael W. Frank found the following in the 1983 Super Bowl program:

"(Twelve days before the game) football actuaries in Reno announced what would be the final line: Green Bay by 13."

D.A.P.