



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Experiences at the IAA Colloquium

by Linden Cole

People seem to be surprised that the Institute of Actuaries of Japan should be celebrating their centennial in 1999. I certainly was, because I didn't know my actuarial history. At the very first International Actuarial Congress in Brussels in 1895, the idea of national actuarial organizations was promoted aggressively. This made sense to the one Japanese actuary in attendance, so he returned to Japan and started organizing the Institute. Their history really does go back 100 years.

In order to allow the maximum possible number of visitors from other countries at the centennial celebration, the Japanese invited both ASTIN and AFIR to have their meetings in Tokyo just before the centennial celebration. In addition, the IAA had council meetings and committee meetings there. Finally, the Japanese Institute invited a large number of actuaries from other countries to attend. I was very fortunate to be one of those invited, along with many others from the Society of Actuaries.

We started on Sunday night with a banquet. They had limited the number invited and had arranged the seating so that there were both Japanese people and foreigners at each table. The food was superb, as it was throughout the meetings.

lemonade at the Tokyo branch of the famous Café de Flores in Paris and later enjoyed Austrian pastry and coffee at the Tokyo branch of the famous Demel's coffeehouse in Vienna. Tokyo is quite a city! But that was all before the centennial celebration started.

Monday morning, after a video about the Institute's first 100 years, leaders of the Institute presented their view of the issues facing the actuarial profession in Japan and suggestions for how they should meet them. These presentations were translated into several languages, including English. It all sounded very familiar. Actuaries are facing the same issues world-wide, and the Society of Actuaries Board and the Committee on Planning are identifying and attempting to deal with more or less the same things. Various actuaries from both Japan and from other countries responded to this report with comments and suggestions. If this presentation is translated and made available, it will be worth reading.

The Monday evening reception had

let someone speak from every actuarial organization represented at

the celebration. They handled this by having a few speak at each session, rather than all speaking at the same session. Many impressive gifts were presented by other actuarial organizations, and of course each presenter of a gift wanted to say something momentous. Considering how many actuarial organizations were represented here, it was a major challenge to figure out how to work everyone in and not overlook anyone.

Entertainment after each evening session was excellent, ranging from a Japanese dance group to an intriguing musical group combining jazz with native Japanese music.

Overall, this was a memorable occasion. The Japanese Institute demonstrated the wonderful tradition of Japanese hospitality, and the Japanese ability to arrange things so that everything works precisely and well. It was a real privilege to be there, and the Japanese Institute of Actuaries deserves all the congratulations they received.

It is my hope that the leaders of the Japanese Institute will take to heart the advice of a senior actuary, who urged them to take a leadership position in the world's actuarial profession in the future. These are capable, intelligent, experienced professionals, and it will be most helpful for the rest of us if they share their insights and ideas, as we all work to meet the needs facing our profession in the next millennium.

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Since my wife and I had eaten at the Sizzler Steak House the previous night, we particularly appreciated a gourmet banquet, not that we (and a whole lot of Japanese people) didn't enjoy the Sizzler's food too. Parenthetically, we also had a French lunch and French

many younger Japanese actuaries present, as well as the senior people. The food on the buffet (both Western food and Japanese food) was absolutely wonderful. We had to earn it by listening to more speeches first (translated into English as necessary), as the Japanese attempted to