



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Editorial

The "blacksmith mentality"

by M. David R. Brown

A surprising number of actuaries seem to assume the world owes us a living collectively as a profession. The latest evidence of this dangerous attitude, which might be termed the "blacksmith mentality," is the letter printed in this issue, signed by 346 Society members. The letter belatedly protests the action of the 1986-87 Board of Governors in agreeing to a severely limited and closely monitored experiment. This experiment would grant credit toward Society membership for achieving a certain standard in accredited college courses in such preliminary subjects as Operations Research, Applied Statistical Methods, and Numerical Methods.

The letter does not address the merits or faults of the proposal but attacks the Board for ignoring the membership's views as expressed in a survey about various education proposals. The letter also asserts a possible constitutional impropriety in the Board's failure to put the matter, in one way or another, to a membership vote.

These allegations are fully dealt with in Michael McGuinness's reply, also in this issue. What is disturbing is the unspoken assumption that it is somehow undemocratic for the Board to entertain even the smallest willingness to consider the college credit question without first obtaining an explicit mandate from the membership. Clearly, what we have here are 346 would-be blacksmiths. Their views are a reflex reaction to the careful examination of a small progressive change in our system. Senior members of the profession and many employers of actuaries have repeatedly expressed concern about the narrowness of our professional training and our reluctance to give up the old ways, both in the subject matter of our syllabus and our educational methods, or lack thereof.

Are we attracting our fair share of the best and the brightest? Or are we driving them away unnecessarily at the front end of our qualification process? Is it possible that strong

Continued on page 8 column 1

FACTUARIES

by Deborah Poppel

This is the first in a series of profiles of members of the Society's Board of Governors. Special thanks to Steve Radcliffe, our first subject, for suggesting the name "Factuaries."



Name: Steve Radcliffe

Birthday: July 6, 1945

Birthplace: Star City, Indiana

Current hometown: Indianapolis

Current employer: American United Life

Children's names and ages: Weston, 14;
Hamilton, 11

My first job was: *as an actuarial student at New York Life. Some of my most memorable moments were working with Charlie Sternhill, Walt Miller, and John Frazier on the first Variable Life paper.*

I'd give anything to have met: *Albert Einstein*

The number of exams I flunked: *0*

The books I recommend most often: *Bonfire of the Vanities, Third Wave*

The last movie I saw: *Midnight Run*

Nobody would believe it if they saw me: *shopping*

The TV show I stay home to watch: *None*

If I could change one thing about myself, I'd: *find more time to chill out and relax.*

When I'm feeling sorry for myself: *I am not a pretty sight.*

My fantasy is: *a round trip flight to the moon, or winning an international barbershop quartet competition.*

The silliest thing I've ever done: *At a reinsurance conference at Vail, after a long and late night, I got up early to ski. Unfortunately, in my fuzzy state I put my ski boots on the wrong feet and complained about how they hurt. Some of my ex-friends promised not to tell anyone.*

If I could do it over I'd have: *started playing golf and tennis earlier in my career.*

My proudest actuarial moment was: *being elected Vice President of the Society of Actuaries.*

The best time of my life was: *living in New York City in the 1970s.*