



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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The Newsletter of the  
Society of Actuaries

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# THE Actuary

## Centennial meeting a special celebration SOA LIBRARY

by Robin B. Leckie  
Centennial Program Chairperson

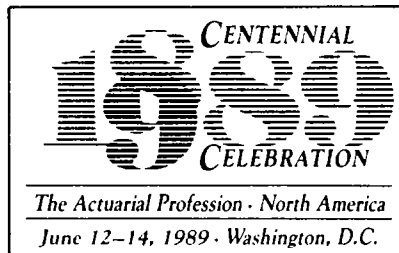
More than 1,200 actuaries traveled to Washington, D.C., last month for a landmark event, the Centennial Celebration of the Actuarial Profession in North America.

This historic meeting was memorable for the quality of the presentations, for the cooperative effort among the five sponsoring organizations, and for a pervading spirit of pride in our profession. Held June 12-14 at the Sheraton Washington Hotel, it was indeed a celebration. Planners pulled out all the stops.

As attendees filed into the Monday morning opening session, they knew to expect something special. Three large screens, nearly two stories high, formed the backdrop for a 100-foot-long decorated stage set: on each screen were splashed - in technicolor - the logos of the sponsoring organizations and the Centennial logo. As soon as a fife and drum corps began presentation of the U.S. and Canadian colors, video cameras focused on them and lit up the center screen with a 15-foot-high video image.

This high-tech treat, known as video enhancement, was used for all general sessions. The video cameras focused on speakers and panelists as they spoke, and the giant screen enabled even those at the back of the large ballroom to catch every nuance of expression.

Monday morning's session offered another first for an actuarial meeting, an elaborate 12-projector audio-visual show using hundreds of slides at a rate of 90 a minute to



picture our progress from 1889 to the present. The heavily animated show took us through our history decade by decade, interspersing photos of actuarial leaders, artifacts and events with scenes from the top news stories of the day. (By the way, videotapes of the slide show are available through the Society Library.)

Another celebratory highlight was the black-tie dinner Tuesday evening, which sparkled with actuaries and their spouses in tuxedos and chiffon. After dinner, the inspired music and antics of the world-renowned Canadian Brass had the audience laughing one minute and listening in awed silence during the next. The congenial Canadians earned a standing ovation.

These special touches helped us support Tom Bowles and the steering committee in reaching our number-one goal: Make this meeting a celebration. We hoped for a memorable, exciting, uplifting event, acknowledging the transition of a profession of which we are very proud.

Our second goal was to put together a program of eternal, rather than ephemeral, substance examining our intellectual foundations. Our speakers did not disappoint. Some standouts include Jim Anderson's talk; the papers by Jim Tilley and Hans Buhlmann, the keynote speech by Willard Estey (article, page 5) and the close by Ken Clark.

Our 100th anniversary also offers a good time to take a look at other areas: our traditions, our achievements and our professional tools. The program was designed to pull those elements together and then examine as intellectually as possible the tools we will need to meet emerging opportunities. Because we still are in a transition from contingency scientists to actuarial professionals, we wanted to know what the public thinks of us. That's why we scheduled a session examining "The Challenge from Without" (article, page 13).

Continued on page 2 column 2

### In this issue:

Centennial meeting a special celebration Robin B. Leckie _____	1	Centennial panel examines challenges from without Judith Bluder _____	13
Speakers examine foundations _____	3	Overseas visitors present anniversary gifts _____	15
Estey defines professionalism _____	5	News conference draws media attention to Centennial _____	16
Five presidents tackle major issues _____	6	The Centennial in historical perspective _____	16
We have only just begun R. Stephen Radcliffe _____	6	Information technology could overturn actuarial concepts _____	17
Technology, competition to change profession Judith Bluder _____	10	Descendant of Ellzur Wright dies _____	18
Centennial innovations may change future meetings _____	11	Mortality trends of males and females _____	18
<i>Fundamental Concepts</i> to shape standards and principles _____	12	Actucroscopic _____	20

# THE Actuary

## The Newsletter of the Society of Actuaries

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## Celebration cont'd

Third, we wanted to encourage unity of the profession. To that end, all five sponsoring organizations contributed to the meeting, and all five logos were displayed on the slide screens throughout the meeting. A panel discussion featuring the five presidents Wednesday morning was a successful exercise in ecumenism (article, page 6).

We were very successful in our fourth goal — encouraging international participation. More than 100 overseas guests — from Europe, the Far East, Australia and points between and beyond — came to share in our celebration. Many brought exquisite gifts (article, page 15).

As a Canadian, I want to mention the large Canadian influence on the Centennial celebration. Both the opening and the closing speakers were Canadian, and the major entertainment was provided by a Canadian group. We are truly a North American actuarial community.

This special edition of *The Actuary* is being published as a remembrance for those who attended the celebration. For those who missed this historic occasion, we hope that it conveys the spirit of a meeting that made all actuaries there feel good about themselves as members of our profession.

Robin B. Leckie, a former President of the Society and of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, heads R. B. Leckie & Associates. He is an Associate Editor of *The Actuary*.

*Below: A technician checks the audio/visual equipment.*

*Below, right: The Alexandria Royal Fyfes and Drums march to stage for presentation of colors.*

*Bottom: Video enhancement — an innovation at actuarial meetings — projected a 15-foot-high live image of each speaker on a screen behind the stage.*

