

# MEMOIR

ROBERT ERIC BEARD

BOBBIE BEARD who died on 7 November 1983 at the age of 72 was undoubtedly one of the most eminent actuaries of his generation. He had a brilliant intellect which he successfully applied both to producing a great deal of original research and to the practical problems of managing a large insurance office.

Born in January 1911 he was educated at Southend-on-Sea High School for Boys. Coming from an innovative engineering family his first thoughts were to a future in the family tradition, but an already evident aptitude in mathematics led him to choose an actuarial career and he joined the Pearl in 1928. As was common in those days he was required to start at the bottom of the ladder as a postal clerk and it was some time before he was transferred to the Actuarial Department. But he then came under the influence of a number of prominent actuaries of those days who no doubt helped to mould his future interests and involvement in Institute affairs.

He qualified as a Fellow in 1938 and in the same year became a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society. Soon after qualification he was sent to the United States to investigate the reserving problems of the Company's then substantial fire and accident business in that country, and this generated a lifelong interest in all aspects of non-life insurance. During the war he was directed to the Admiralty as Statistical Adviser to the Fleet Air Arm and used this period to develop his knowledge of mathematical statistics to a very high level. On his return to the Pearl he was appointed an Assistant General Manager and for many years managed the Company's non-life operations at home and overseas, as well as overseeing the administration of the Company's life business. He was also responsible for the mechanization and the subsequent computerization of the Company's accounting functions. In 1967 he became General Manager (now designated Chief General Manager) and guided the Company's affairs for the next 5 years, introducing many new modern management techniques and reorganizing the Company's widespread field force.

Outside his Pearl career Bobbie's active mind found many openings. Despite his engineering background it was perhaps a little surprising that he should in his student days design and build a small-scale differential analyser which he applied to the calculation of actuarial functions (described in *J.I.A.* 71). Thereafter his early interests were in the mathematical generation of actuarial functions and in mortality and morbidity studies. He published several papers in the 1950s (*J.I.A.* 73, 75, 76, 77) which stemmed from this mathematical expertise and his use of the incomplete gamma function for the calculation of actuarial functions (*J.I.A.* 78) is well known to most actuaries from their student days. He wrote a paper in the middle sixties for the Assurance Medical Society which compared male and female mortality from lung cancer, and his research convinced him of the association between lung cancer and cigarette smoking. Thereafter he smoked no more cigarettes although he puffed—noisily—at his pipe for many more years.

However, Bobbie Beard will be remembered by most actuaries for his work on the application of statistical and actuarial methods to non-life insurance and the development of techniques of financial control of insurance operations. In this field he was undoubtedly a world leader.

He published a number of papers on these themes in *J.I.A.*, *J.S.S.*, and the *ASTIN Bulletin*. He was proud of the first textbook on Risk Theory which he wrote jointly with two Finnish actuaries, Pentikainen and Pesonen, and which is now compulsory reading for the modern actuary.

Bobbie Beard served as an examiner for the Institute for many years and was elected to the Council in 1951, serving thereon for 13 years. He was Honorary Secretary in 1959–61 and Vice President from 1962–65. He was a founder member, secretary, editor and chairman of ASTIN and a corresponding member of the Association Royale des Actuaries Belges, of the Instituto Italiano degli Attuari and of the Association des Actuaries Suisses. He was a Fellow of the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications and became one of their Vice-Presidents. He was also for a time a Vice-President of the British Cancer Council and involved in coordinating their fund raising.

He received the M.B.E. in 1945 for his wartime work and the O.B.E. in 1967 for services to

Government, related to supervisory aspects of non-life insurance. He was awarded the Institute Centenary prize in 1948 and received a fully deserved Institute silver medal in 1972 in recognition of service of special importance to the actuarial profession.

He retired from the Pearl in 1972 and became a part-time insurance adviser to the Department of Trade and Industry and was also invited to become a part-time Professor at the Department of Mathematics at Essex University. Subsequently, when he moved house—after more than 60 years at Leigh-on-Sea—he was attached in a similar capacity to Nottingham University.

Despite his eminence, Bobbie Beard was no dry academic. His work was essentially practical. He had a keen sense of humour and enjoyed life to the full. He was the most approachable of men and went out of his way to help young people—particularly young actuaries—to learn about the insurance world. He served for many years on the Advanced Studies Committee of the Insurance Institute of London with the intention of bringing together the practical knowledge of the non-life underwriter and the theoretical statistical techniques of the actuary.

Bobbie loved talk and discussion whatever the subject and whether round the lunch table, at the Council of the B.I.A. or the I.L.O.A.—where he was Chairman from 1971–72—or at more formal gatherings which he addressed. He also loved travelling, although probably as much for the contacts he established with other actuaries worldwide than for the travel itself. But more than anything he loved his work; the amount of arithmetical manipulation on claim distributions that he would perform over a weekend—prior to the day of the home computer or even the electronic calculator—had to be seen to be believed, and it seldom needed checking!

He was no great sportsman. He claimed that there was no coordination between his mind and his muscles, but he was an active cross-country runner in his younger days and was at one time President of the Insurance Athletic Association.

Bobbie was happily married for many years to Jane Elizabeth (Chick) who died about a year before him. He is survived by a son and daughter.

R. E. HOLLAND

#### JOAN MARY THOMPSON

JOAN THOMPSON was born in May 1935 to a British father and a Swedish mother. When she was only 15 she contracted a virulent form of rheumatoid arthritis and for the rest of her life fought a brave battle to avoid becoming completely chairborne. She decided to try for the Institute examinations as the actuarial profession appeared to be the only one which did not require articles, or a similar form of apprenticeship, as a condition of working for qualification.

In 1965 she became an Associate of the Institute and was advised that, at that stage, it would be desirable for her to obtain some practical experience if she intended to attempt what has since become known as Part B of the examination syllabus. She joined the firm of Rodney Barnett & Company whose ground floor offices were ideal for her condition, in which she was unable to negotiate more than a single shallow step. She became a partner in the firm shortly after qualifying as a Fellow in 1968. She was always grateful that President Jim Pegler organized the ceremony of presenting the Fellowship certificates so that she did not have to go up to him for her presentation.

For some years her disability appeared stable. However, in the mid-1970s her condition started to deteriorate seriously and she encountered a series of setbacks, each of which had the effect of restricting still further her already limited physical capabilities. Eventually she was only able to work from home, which imposed severe constraints on her professional activities. She resigned as an executive partner in 1978, remaining thereafter as a consultant. Latterly she managed to retain some active involvement in the profession by doing a certain amount of Friendly Society work for Bacon & Woodrow.

A major turning point in Joan's life occurred in 1979 when she was offered a place in 48 Boundary Road, a specially designed complex organized in such a way that the residents, all of whom are disabled, are afforded maximum assistance in retaining as much independence as possible. She was