

OBITUARY

A. DOREEN HART (née McDermott)

1937-2009

Editor, *British Actuarial Journal*

Doreen Hart's sudden death on 8th December 2009 has been a shock to all those who knew her. Her death leaves a vacuum not only with her immediate family but also with her church and the Actuarial Profession. All have benefitted over the years from her close involvement.

Born in February 1937, Doreen McDermott spent the early part of her life in Surbiton but, like many children, was sent with her brother to stay with relatives on a farm in Dorset when the Second World War made living in London dangerous. After the war she attended Tiffin Girls' Grammar School in Kingston followed by Imperial College, from which she graduated with a degree in statistical mathematics. This gained her entry as a student to the Institute of Actuaries and she qualified as a Fellow in 1967, being the only lady in 59 new Fellows. She was the sixteenth lady to become a Fellow but, more significantly for the times, the first married lady to do so, having married her schoolmaster husband, Denis, in the summer of 1966.

Like many quiet, self-effacing people, there was a Doreen that only those close to her probably knew. Family came first for Doreen despite being an early role model for today's working mothers. However, whatever Doreen did, she did well, and so as the family grew up and went to school, she found interests to fill any gaps in her day. Having moved to Richmond in Yorkshire with her husband's teaching career, she soon became involved in the local community through the Methodist Church, the Guides and as a school governor. All benefitted not only from her commitment to their endeavours, but also from her financial acumen, with Doreen often taking on the role of treasurer. As the minister said in his eulogy, "many of you who are present at this service and what you see around you are a tribute to Doreen and her involvement with the church and the local community." Doreen had a very strong faith and became an accredited local preacher in 1991.

If her service to the community was not enough, for over 30 years she was involved with editing the journals of the Actuarial Profession. During this time she also served on many different committees of the Profession. Doreen was appointed as an assistant editor of the *Journal of the Institute of Actuaries* in 1975 and became its editor in 1988. When the *British Actuarial Journal* replaced it and the Faculty's equivalent journal in 1995 she was

appointed editor of the new publication, a position she held at her death. She was a tremendously gifted lady with a brilliant mind, a superb planner, organiser and arranger who used her gifts well. Her attention to detail and her ability to instil this in assistant and deputy editors will be her legacy to the Profession. Those who have worked with her have been very privileged to do so.

Doreen had been researching her family tree for over 10 years and had traced her direct ancestors back for over 150 years, with some traced back further than that. In her researches she discovered that one of her own ancestors was transported to Australia in 1851.

Doreen loved to travel and in recent times had visited friends and family in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, had been youth hostelling in Iceland and travelled to Jordan, Kenya and numerous European countries. A trip to Egypt was in planning at the time of her death. However travel was not a new adventure for Doreen, and one of her greatest thrills occurred when she travelled to Alabama at the time of the Civil Rights Movement, and met Dr Martin Luther King. She was a lady ahead of her time.

This final quote from the minister's eulogy says it all about Doreen.

"Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some people move our souls to dance. They awaken us to a new understanding with the passing whisper of their wisdom, and make the sky more beautiful to gaze upon. Some people stay in our lives awhile, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same."

Doreen is survived by her children Helen and Charlie and seven grandchildren, Denis having passed away shortly after his retirement in 1996.