OBITUARY

HILARY L. SEAL
11th January 1911–25th July 1984

On July 25, 1984 actuarial science lost one of its greatest personalities: Hilary L. Seal died from the side effects of a thrombosis. This was a sudden end to his activity, which was always at the 200% level. On an operational scale, Hilary stayed young. It remains to our satisfaction that the fruits of his activity will be here for future generations.

Hilary received his formal education in his native England, first at Birmingham University, then at University College, London, where he graduated in Statistics with first class honors. He had an actuarial position in Brazil, but returned to England to serve his country during and shortly after World War II as a statistician in the Admiralty. In 1948 he received his Ph.D. for his thesis on "Discrete Random Processes in Relation to Mortality Data". At this time it was clear that the old island was too small for Hilary; he immigrated to North America. He worked briefly for an insurance company in Toronto, then moved to New York and New Haven, where he became a successful consultant. He was able to combine his professional activity with an impressive scientific career. For twenty years he taught statistics at Yale University. When he and his family moved to Apples (Switzerland) in 1972, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Lausanne and the University of Lausanne secured his services; in 1980 Hilary occupied the Chair of Honor of the Institute of Actuarial Science of the University of Lausanne.

Hilary's publications are manifold and cover the broad range of statistics and actuarial science. A bibliography is being prepared and will be published soon. The topics of his papers include estimation of decrement rates, multivariate statistics, pension mathematics, risk theory, queuing theory, numerical methods such as simulation and inversion of Laplace transforms; Hilary made good use of the computer at a time when other actuaries still relied on the abacus. His monographs are classics: Multivariate Statistical Analysis for Biologists (1964), Stochastic Theory of a Risk Business (1969), Survival Probabilities: The Goal of Risk Theory (1978).

Hilary was a brilliant speaker. When he talked, one could expect fireworks. But no matter how spectacular his lectures were, they were always based on extensive research. One of Hilary's loves was reading what others had been writing. His famous library is the testimony to this passion.

For the readers of the Astin Bulletin who had neither the opportunity to listen to Hilary nor to know him, we reprint the beginning of a letter that he wrote in 1950 to the Editors of the Journal of the Institute of Actuaries Students Society. The topic is "Spot the Prior Reference", and the letter begins as follows:

> A game which is fast become a favourite relaxation of the more priggish type of mathematician is one which might be called: Spot the prior reference.
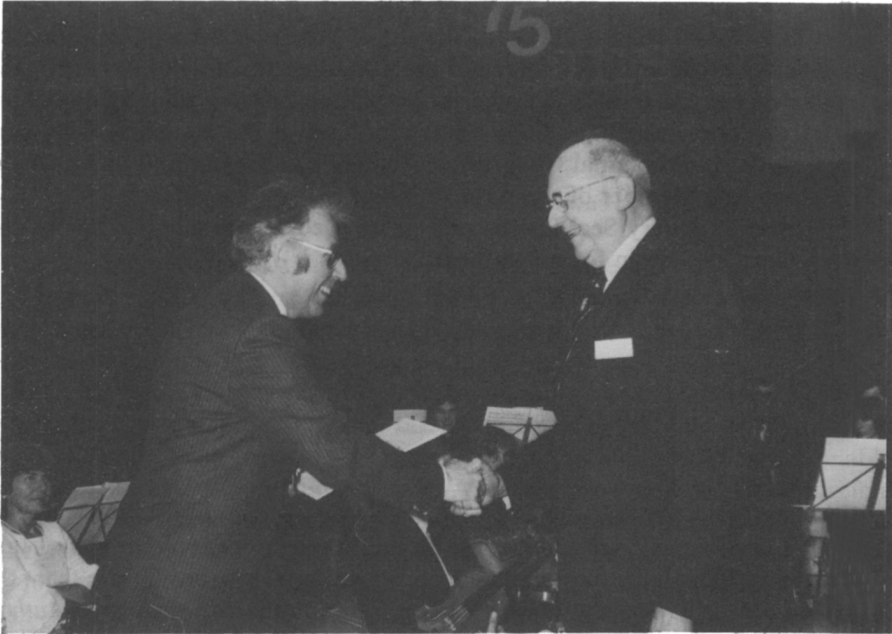
Photograph shows the presentation of Corresponding Membership in the Association of Swiss Actuaries in June 1980.

The equipment is elementary—a good memory or an extensive system of card records with appropriate cross-references. The object of the game is simple—the infliction of a blow to the self-esteem of a colleague while retaining an appearance of scientific detachment.

The first move is made by an author who inadvertently omits that thorough search through the numerous volumes of *Mathematical Reviews* and the *Zentralblatt für Mathematik* which nowadays occupies as much of a mathematician's time as the preparation of a supposedly original article. The second move falls to the editor whose referees fail to notice that the work submitted has already appeared in print in a substantially similar form ten, twenty or even a hundred years earlier—and the game is on. The reviewer now appears on the scene and scores one or more points according to the number of years he can span and the amount of scorn he can convey in a politely worded account of the author's limitations. The game continues as a third and fourth writer show that even the reviewer himself has not found the site of original publication of the material presented. Final honours go to the player who has revealed the greatest number of missing references in the previous writers' articles.

Following this introduction, Hilary showed that the convolution of uniform distributions (a favorite topic of some writers of the 20th century) could be traced down to the 18th century . . ..

Hilary was a Fellow of the Faculty of Actuaries in Scotland, an Associate of the Institute of Actuaries, a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, an Associate of the Society of Actuaries, a Fellow of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and a member of more than a dozen other professional societies. He was one of the very few actuaries who have been elected Fellows of the American Statistical Society. At the International Congress of Actuaries in Switzerland he was made a Corresponding Member of the Association of Swiss Actuaries.

We shall miss Hilary Seal for his professional contributions. His family and his friends will miss him for much more.

H. U. GERBER

EDITORIAL

This is the last issue of *Astin Bulletin* to be published under my editorship. Hans Bühlmann and D. Harry Reid will take on the editorial responsibilities from the next issue onwards. Their addresses can be found in the *Instructions to Authors* on the inside back cover.

I feel priviledged to have serived as Editor of the *Astin Bulletin*, a job which I have done for almost eight years now. It brought me into contact with authors and papers and also enabled me to read referees' reports. I am confident that these inputs have influenced my own thinking on insurance matters in a positive way. It is an experience which I am glad to have had and I take this opportunity to thank all the people involved; authors, referees, members of the Editorial Board as well as the membership of Astin for having confidence in me.