An appreciation of Hugh J Miser

Hugh Miser, a pioneer Operational Researcher in World War II and a major figure in the field ever since, died on 22 June 1999. His contribution to OR in the USA was prodigious. He was a founding member of ORSA, served in turn as Secretary, Vice-President and, in 1962–1963, as President. He served as editor-in-chief of *Operations Research* from 1968–1975 at a key time in the expansion of the profession. His contributions never stopped, and he was awarded the Morse lectureship at the INFORMS meeting in May 1999, although he had not been able to deliver it by the time of his death.

Among his honours not already mentioned, he received an Air Force Medal for outstanding and exceptional civil service, the 1952 Arthur S. Fleming Award for outstanding young civil servants, and the 1990 Harold Lardner Prize and Lectureship of the Canadian Operations Research Society. He recently received the Jacinto Steinhart Memorial Award, which is given jointly by INFORMS and the Center for Naval Analysis. In addition he was a founding member of the Academy of Sciences in his adopted home state of Connecticut.

Hugh also made a major impact on the international OR community. He attended the first international conference on OR, held in Oxford in 1957, and was present at every subsequent meeting of IFORS until his death — an attendance record shared only by Prof. Brian Haley. He played a major part in establishing International Abstracts in Operational Research and in recent years had been helping with the revision of IFORS' statutes.

Hugh Miser had been a mathematics student and teacher at various US universities, receiving a doctorate in pure mathematics at Ohio State University in 1946. He served with the US Air Force as an Operations Researcher in Guam, joining the Operations Analysis Office at Headquarters in 1949. In the next 20 years he held a number of responsible OR posts in a wide range of application areas, including the Research Triangle Institute, MIT, the Mitre Corporation, and the Travelers Research Center. At the latter he led a successful effort to reorient the automobile insurance industry's approach to traffic safety. In 1969 he returned to academia as professor on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

In 1979, three years before his formal retirement from the University of Massachusetts, his career took a new twist. He was seconded to the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis in Vienna with the primary task of overseeing the production of a Handbook of Systems Analysis, but inevitably he found himself overhauling the whole of the publishing policy of the Institute. Since IIASA

was supported by 15 countries, East and West, he was soon known to and respected by scholars from many countries and many disciplines. To him, Applied Systems Analysis was all embracing. Working together with Ed Quade, who sadly died in the early stages of the work, he conceived the idea that the Handbook should be a three-volume work covering Procedures, Craft Issues and Cases. He now had access to all the leading scholars in the field and was able to invite them to IIASA to work on their contributions. By the time he left he had most of the first volume in draft, and it was agreed that he should remain responsible for the completion of the work. This was no light task; the first volume was published in 1985, the third only in 1995. The combined opus remains a unique resource for both practitioners and teachers of OR and Systems Analysis.

His activity did not end there. His output continued at 'about six pieces a year of one sort or another' (his own words) right until his death. In recent years, they included the editing of four extended contemporary accounts of wartime OR in the US Air Force, a substantial paper on establishing and maintaining OR groups at the Bowness Symposium in 1996 (see *JORS*, April 1998), articles on editing a scientific journal, and contributions to the philosophical understanding of OR. But most importantly he continued to make a significant contribution to the subject's literature as a referee of choice for many other editors. He was equally critical of sloppy thinking as he was of indifference to practicalities. To receive his criticism of a draft paper was like being mauled by a friendly lion. You felt yourself being torn to pieces and then tenderly reconstructed in such a way that your pearls of wisdom could be seen and understood. In negotiation he was wise, charming, skilled at defusing explosive situations, but—if he felt strongly—immovable.

At first meeting, Hugh could appear to be just a folksy raconteur, with a story to match all occasions. You soon became aware of his wide ranging intellectual curiosity, his wisdom and his extraordinary thoroughness and hard work. He was an editor supreme, meticulous but always looking for new ideas. Beneath all this he was a man with wide cultural interests—particularly in music and in his church. And at the heart of it all there was an enormous pride in his wife, Jody, his lovely rambling home and his family. There may not be any theorems with his name attached, but his influence on the subject has been enormous.

Rolfe Tomlinson
September 1999