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A Gentleman and a Scholar

JIM HICKMAN's curriculum vitae is eight packed pages long. Somehow not included in the already long list of contributions Hickman has made to the actuarial profession and society in general is his six-year tenure on the *Contingencies* editorial advisory board (EAB). Nevertheless, that's how I met him and how he came to embody the essence of the actuarial profession for me.

Jim Hickman passed away on Sept. 10, at the age of 79, after a long bout with cancer. He left the EAB in 2003, but that didn't mean he left the profession. According to Dwight K. Bartlett, also a longtime member of the EAB, he worked closely with Jim on several recent projects regarding the profession. Hickman was so engaged and so energetic, as he always was about everything, that Bartlett never realized he was even sick.

"Jim's contributions to our profession and to the public good are reflected in the literature he created," says Bartlett, "most notably as coauthor of the classic textbook *Actuarial Mathematics*, and the organizational positions he filled. He chaired many professional committees and served as an officer and a member of the Board of Governors of the Society of Actuaries. He was a leader in the development of academically based actuarial education at the University of Wisconsin. All of the foregoing led to his being a recipient in 1997 of the Jarvis Farley Service Award of the American Academy of Actuaries, and are well chronicled in *Our Yesterdays*, E.J. Moorhead's history of our profession."

"I knew Jim for about 40 years," recalls Fred Kilbourne, also an EAB member, "and served with him during that time on many actuarial committees, most or all dedicated to improving the actuarial profession. With that as my database, I confidently assert that Jim Hickman was a gentleman and a scholar."

I came into my first EAB meeting in 1997 knowing little about actuaries and less about what actuaries do. He was a professor emeritus at the time, the quiet, gray-haired, scholarly man in the suit (alone among all the business casuals). And he was a revelation. One of my main goals at that meeting (and subsequent meetings, too, for that matter) was to get some

good ideas for *Contingencies* articles from people who know the profession.

Jim had ideas. Lots of them. Some of them I couldn't begin to understand. Some sounded as intriguing to me as they clearly were to him. And they came tumbling out, one after another, in his perfectly modulated announcer's voice, in impeccable written English that was nevertheless coming out of his mouth, extemporaneously, without notes. I scrambled to keep up. It wasn't easy.

The most immediate results were two articles Jim wrote himself, one on famous actuaries who changed the profession (May/June 1999) and another on actuaries and operations research in World War II (May/June 2000). And it was Jim's idea to do an article on how the Islamic world approaches the idea of insurance, which led to Zainal Abidin Mohd. Kassim's article on Takaful in the January/February 2005 issue.

But Jim was more than just a fountain of ideas. In many ways, he was the ideal audience for *Contingencies*: curious, inquisitive, trenchant, a little bit playful, and always willing to check the other side of the envelope.

"In my 1984 presidential address to the Society of Actuaries," says Dwight Bartlett, "I called on the profession to continue to produce the kind of heroes who have characterized the profession since its origin and served as an inspiration to each succeeding generation. Jim admirably filled that role as well as any other member of his generation. He provided the broad shoulders on which all current members of the profession stand in our efforts to serve the profession, our clients, and the public welfare with the skill, energy, and integrity that were so characteristic of Jim's own professional life. *Ave atque vale*, Jim, you good and noble servant."