



Wray Smith (1925–2000)

HERO: “A person prominent in some event, field, period, or cause by reason of his special achievements or contributions.”

by Joan Lee Turek
Department of Health
and Human Services

The definition of ‘hero’ varies from “a man, often born of one mortal and one divine parent, who is endowed with great courage and strength celebrated for his bold exploits and favored by the gods” to “a sandwich of heroic size made with a small loaf of crusty bread split lengthwise, containing lettuce, condiments, and a variety of meats and cheeses.” Wray Smith’s heroism falls somewhere in the middle of these definitions: “A person prominent in some event, field, period, or cause by reason of his special achievements or contributions.”

Wray’s professional interests were both technical and educational. He was trained as an engineer and worked for the University of Michigan and Consumer Union in jobs that required a technical education, but also involved educating the public. His early work included technical writing. Later, he decided to return to school and earn a doctoral degree in the Operations Research Department at

George Washington University. His scholastic emphasis was in statistics. Wray strongly thought people should continue to learn throughout their lives. Going back to school was a way for him to do this formally. He completed his dissertation and became a Doctor of Science in 1980, but remained a student until his death.

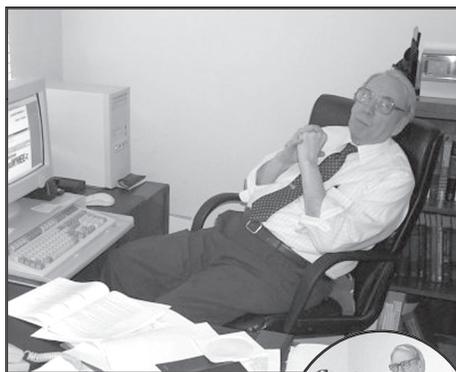
More important to his heroism was Wray’s concern for people. Programmatically, Wray was interested in people. He worked for the House Education Committee, the Peace Corps, and the Job Corps in positions that promoted the education of others. Later, at the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) (later the Department of Health and Human Services), he became more involved in poverty thresholds and the measurement of income.

His interests were not just theoretical. Wray had a strong operational interest. At

Job Corps, Wray activated the first Job Corps training centers and was responsible for the planning, programming, and budgeting of major operational programs. At HEW, he also became involved in welfare reform operational issues, preparing analyses of alternative operations designs for possible welfare reform legislation. He also was involved in the technical aspects of providing cost estimates for alternative formulations. Other new initiatives of the Carter administration were national health insurance and hospital cost containment. Wray's office assisted running the models and providing cost estimates. Another new initiative was the combining of Medicare and Medicaid in a new agency—the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). Don Wortman, the acting administrator of HCFA, asked Wray to pull together a fast, comprehensive look at the technical/operational problems of integrating the Medicaid, Medicare, and quality control information systems in the new agency. This he did. In 1978, Wray received the Departmental Superior Service Award for his work on these new initiatives.

Wray's skill as a senior bureaucrat was well-known and, in 1978, he also served at a workshop for improving the management of human resources in HEW. By 1979, Wray's office had increased from a staff of 20 full-time personnel to 75 and was projected to grow to 90. In addition, there were part-time consultants, temporary employees, and employees of other governmental organizations (states and localities) or universities temporarily assigned to the office (IPAs). By then, Wray served as the senior technical policy adviser and task leader on major initiatives in the areas of immigration and refugee policy, Hispanic needs assessment, civil rights data on financially troubled hospitals, consumer affairs data, and operational policies for information and referral in addition to heading the Office of Technical Support. Beyond the modeling efforts, the Office of Technical Support continued to have responsibility for the Income Survey Development Program (predecessor of the Survey of Income and Program Participation), scientific computation, and other modeling efforts. In 1980, Wray moved to the Department of Energy. This served not as an end of his interest in social policy issues, but as a short change in his major focus. After his retirement from the federal government, Wray continued his work in social policy.

Most important to his heroism was Wray's concern for individuals. He never



failed to ask about spouses and children and always talked about his own. Sometimes, he asked about a person's car or computer—again sharing information about his new car or computer. He gave solid advice and nodded sagely when all that was needed was a sounding board. And, he didn't just do this for one or two people; there were many who came to Wray for advice and encouragement at all stages in their careers. It was not an accident that the American Statistical Association award given in his name is intended to reward promising young statisticians for their diligence, thereby encouraging them to consider a future in government statistics.

It was his role as a mentor, more than being a Fellow of the American Statistical Association or having a scholarly or bureaucratic resume, that made Wray Jackson Smith a hero. He was certainly not a sandwich. ■

For more information on the Wray Jackson Smith Scholarship, visit www.amstat.org/sections/sgovt/wjsann05.htm.

Colleagues Remember Wray

Wray was my teacher, my mentor, my friend. I began as his student at George Washington University and worked with him at Synectics for 14 years. He was responsible for shaping my career and more. He pushed me to achieve ... in my work, in academics, and in personal growth.

Sameena Salvucci, PhD

A superb statistician with familiarity in almost all branches in the field, Wray was an ideal colleague for any statistician.

Dhirendra Ghosh, FRSS

When I think of Wray, I think of sage advice and a steady hand.

Jeff Whitesell

CAN YOU HELP?



The ASA Would Like Your Help In Providing Information for Our Annual Salary Report!

2005–2006 Salary Report of Academic Statisticians

The American Statistical Association welcomes you to participate in our annual collection of salary data for academic statisticians. Your input in this report is very important to us. If you would like the opportunity to participate, please complete the survey at <http://www.amstat.org/misc/salaryreport/index.cfm>. The closing date is October 17, 2005.

If you have any questions, please contact Carole Sutton by sending an email to carole@amstat.org or by calling (703) 684-1221, ext. 163.