

# A Conversation with Maurice Bartlett

Ingram Olkin

Maurice Stevenson Bartlett was born on June 18, 1910 in London. He received his secondary education at Latymer Upper School and subsequently at Queen's College, Cambridge. His first position in 1933 was as Assistant lecturer in the Department of Statistics at University College London. In 1934 he joined the Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) Research Station of Jealott's Hill. Much of his early work was carried out during his stay at ICI, which he left in 1938 to become a lecturer in mathematics at Cambridge. During World War II he was involved in rocket research, and in 1947 became Chair of Mathematical Statistics at the University of Manchester. He returned to University College London as Professor of Statistics in 1960. From 1967 to 1975, when he retired, he was Professor of Biomathematics at Oxford. He was elected a Fellow at the Royal Society in 1961, was awarded the Guy Medal in Gold of the Royal Statistical Society in 1969, received the Weldon medal from the University of Oxford in 1971, an honorary D.Sc. from the University of Chicago in 1966 and from the University of Hull in 1986. He was President of the Manchester Statistical Society 1959–1960 and of the Royal Statistical Society 1966–1967. He became an honorary member of the International Statistical Institute in 1980.

The following conversation took place in late February 1987 in Santa Barbara, California.

## THE MAKING OF STATISTICIANS

**Olkin:** Professor Bartlett, we're really very pleased to have this opportunity to review some parts of your professional life and career. I know that your connections in statistics have touched on Cambridge University, University College London, Imperial Chemical Industries, University of Manchester, Oxford, and that many of your biographical sketches and reminiscences are described elsewhere.

Before we start, I'd like to make sure that our readers have these references. There is the book edited by J. Gani entitled *The Making of Statisticians* published by Springer-Verlag in 1982 that contains an autobiographical chapter (pages 41–60) entitled "Chance and change."

Earlier, in 1956, you have an expository paper on a visit to Moscow for the Third Soviet Mathematical Congress in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A* Volume 119, page 456. In 1965, you have a general article entitled "R. A. Fisher and the last 50 years of statistical methodology." This article comprised the first R. A. Fisher lecture in the United States.

There is another general article in 1980 "All our yesterdays," *Newsletter* Number 69 of CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization).

**Bartlett:** You are very well informed, I must say.

**Olkin:** There is also an obituary on Egon Pearson, 1895–1980, in *Biometrika*, Volume 68, pages 1–11.

**Bartlett:** There is a longer obituary of Pearson in a Royal Society memoir. That was also followed by a biographical note of Pearson for the *Dictionary of National Biography* published in England.

**Olkin:** I note that there is a bibliography of some of your papers in *Statistica*, Volume 16, 1956, pages 97–100. Do you recall other general articles that we might let our readers know about?

**Bartlett:** I can't recollect any general articles which would refer much to my life, as such. I have a biographical note about J. O. Irwin in the *International Statistical Review* [52 (1984) 109–114]. This is not particularly autobiographical except insofar as it relates to Irwin.

## THE EARLY YEARS

**Olkin:** Many of these articles provide some background about yourself and your early days in statistics. I thought that we might begin with a discussion of some of your statistical papers. I note from your bibliography that there was a series of papers from 1933 to 1940. This was a very exciting time in statistics. There were papers by Hotelling on the multivariate  $t$ -statistic in 1931, on principal components in