

GEORGE E. NICHOLSON, JR., 1918–1971¹⁾

George Edward Nicholson, Jr., long-time Secretary of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, died on December 3, 1971, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. His tragic and untimely death, ending a career of high distinction, was a keenly felt loss to his many friends and colleagues throughout the world.

Born in 1918 in Brooklyn, New York, he entered the University of North Carolina in 1936, and was graduated with the bachelor's degree in 1940 and a master's degree in mathematics in 1941. His first academic appointment was instructor of mathematics at the Georgia Institute of Technology from 1941 to 1943, and in 1944 he returned to the University of North Carolina as a lecturer in mathematics. Later that year he enlisted as a civilian in the war effort, accepting the post of research mathematician at Columbia University. While in this position he became involved with statistics in the rapidly developing field of operations analysis, serving with distinction as an operations analyst with the United States Air Force on Saipan until the end of the war. For his outstanding contributions in this capacity, he was later awarded the Medal of Freedom by the Air Force in 1947.

He resumed his graduate studies in 1945, first at Columbia University and then at the University of North Carolina when the Department of Mathematical Statistics was established at Chapel Hill in 1946. He received the Ph. D. degree in 1948 and joined the faculty of the Department of Mathematical Statistics as assistant professor. In 1952 he became chairman of the department, a position in which he served for 19 consecutive years. He was promoted to associate professor in 1952 and full professor in 1956. During his long service as chairman of the department, Dr. Nicholson maintained and developed that department's international prominence. He had an infectious enthusiasm for the behavior of statistics in practical applications and passed this along to students, scientists, and administrators in diverse fields. He was in large measure responsible for the establishment of the Triangle Universities Computation Center in North Carolina, which has become known nationwide as a successful model of inter-institutional cooperation.

He was prominently involved in nationwide efforts to improve the teaching of statistics and mathematics. Thus from 1961 to 1964 he was a member of the Research Committee of College Scholarship Service established by the College Entrance Examination Board. Since its inception in 1965 he has been active on the Survey Committee of the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences, which produced important studies on undergraduate and graduate training in mathematics. He played an influential part on the Panel on Statistics of the

¹⁾ Editor's Note: This article is based on a memorial resolution prepared by members of the faculty of the University of North Carolina.



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Committee on the Undergraduate Program in Mathematics, an organ of the Mathematical Association of America.

On an international scale he achieved prominence in academic circles through his encouragement of the practical applications of statistics. Under the auspices of the Cultural Exchange Program of the United States State Department, he developed cooperative programs with other universities in Paris, Rome, São Paulo, and Nihon University in Tokyo, advising them in their curricular development in statistics and operations analysis. At Nihon University he helped create the first Department of Statistics in Japan and assisted in the establishment of a computer facility there.

Throughout his career Dr. Nicholson continued to serve his government and those of other nations. After the war he was a prime consultant of the Department of Defense and the Air Force in weapons evaluation and organization. He served as the U.S. member, and then as chairman, of the Operations Research Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He rendered his expert advice to the governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and of Japan in the development of operations analysis capabilities. For his valuable contributions to NATO, Dr. Nicholson was again decorated in 1965 with the Exceptional Civilian Service Medal by the U. S. Department of Defense.

The Institute of Mathematical Statistics owes lasting gratitude to Dr. Nicholson for his dedicated service as Secretary from 1955 to 1962 and as Executive Secretary from 1962 to 1967, and for his counsel, guidance, and help on numerous committees of the Institute.

He was a Fellow of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics and of the American Statistical Association, and a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Psychometric Society. He was a member of the Founding Committee of the Operations Research Society of America and served on the editorial board of the journal, *Operations Research*.

He is survived by his widow, Virginia; his sons, George E., Britain, and Patrick; his sister, Mrs. Donald Lyon of Chagrin Falls, Ohio; two brothers, Dr. Howard Nicholson of Worcester, Massachusetts, and John Nicholson of Muskegon, Michigan; and his mother, Mrs. Ada White Nicholson.

