

Sue Merchant

Intro

- Delighted to be asked to say a few words today on behalf of the OR Society because Jonathan has been a great supporter of the Society over very many years and a driving force behind many of its initiatives. He has been a positive critic as well as an activist who likes to get stuck in and make things happen, and he has been an inspiration to many of us, particularly during his time as President of the Society (hard act to follow I fear!).
- You will be aware already that he is unique in the number of ORS awards/medals he has been presented with and I'll say something about those in a moment, but I'd like to focus first on his presidency if I may:

Presidency

- Jonathan was president in 86/87 and has the distinction of being one of the few presidents in recent years who has had to compete for the title! He fought off competition from two others no less (Martin Beale and Frank Lyness). Not only that but he was a very young president by today's standards – in his late 40s and was full of energy and social conscience (plus ca change!).
- His activities as president are too numerous to cover fully today so I have picked out a few examples which I think illustrate his talents:
- Jonathan pushed really hard for a Community OR unit to be set up, to provide OR for under-privileged and powerless groups. He persuaded the Council of the day to partially fund the unit for three years initially, and in 1989 it was launched at Northern College. At the end of the three years it became necessary to persuade the treasurer, then Maurice Shutler who had been very sceptical of the whole venture, to continue the funding: apparently the president of the day nearly fell off his chair when Maurice announced that he deemed the scheme a success! The unit is of course now at the University of Lincoln and still going strong!

- Jonathan also convened a workshop in conjunction with the Kings Fund Centre to look at what OR might do for AIDS and also pressed for a conference on the social responsibility of OR.
- At the ORS conference which marked the first 50 years of OR Jonathan took part in a debate about the future of OR (one of many over the years!): his stance, which I think shows his character well, was that 'Noone has decided the future of OR – it's up to us', and indeed he has gone on to bring that statement to life.

Awards

- Moving on to Jonathan's multiple awards: in 1979 Jonathan received the **President's medal**, which is awarded for the best account of successful OR practice presented at the society's conference. Jonathan's paper was 'An education in robustness' which looked at the choice of exam subjects for a 14 year old. It indicated how OR may be used effectively in decision areas which don't command large resources. It was notable for its 'refreshingly direct style'.
- It's clear that following his presidency in 86/87 Jonathan didn't just hang up his cycle clips as others might have done but battled on for OR and the ORS and..
- In 1992 Jonathan was the first recipient of the Beale medal (awarded in memory of Martin Beale) for his sustained and significant contribution through the literature, to the philosophy, theory and practice of OR.
- Then in 2005 Jonathan was awarded Companionship of OR: this is an honour which is awarded for sustained support and encouragement for the development of OR. The citation mentions three particular themes of his substantial contribution: his support/ contribution to Community OR; his influence in drawing together the different threads of 'soft OR' to create the coherent field of study in problem structuring methods; his contribution to OR in developing countries , particularly his co-chairing of the 1st and 5th ICORD conferences (int.conferences on OR in development) and the development of a policy statement securing support for OR in developing countries. 'Jonathan continues to both challenge and exert a strong positive influence on OR'.

- I spent some time hunting through the ORS archive trying find out what the secret of Jonathan's phenomenal success was and only found a small clue, in a leader article he wrote while at an ORS conference in Edinburgh. He explained that it had been said that wartime OR was 90% beer, and commented that in his view it was at least 20% whisky: if that's indeed the case I'm sure we would all drink to that!
- Thank you Jonathan for your immense contribution and inspiration, and I hope that you enjoy these two days.