

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of Dr. Robert M. Haythornthwaite, founder of the American Academy of Mechanics. The following obituary of Dr. Haythornthwaite has been authored by R. T. Shield at the request of the Haythornthwaite family.



ROBERT M. HAYTHORNTHWAITE

Robert M. Haythornthwaite, 84, died February 24 in Catonsville, MD. He is survived by Mary, his wife of 55 years, their son Richard, daughters Jennifer, Susan, and Sheila Glesmann, and Sheila's son Andrew.

Bob founded the American Academy of Mechanics in 1969, was its first president, and has been continuously active in it. He formed the Academy to serve not just the United States but all of the countries in the Americas. In 38 years it has grown to some 700 members of which over 150 have been elected Fellows in recognition of their contributions to mechanics. The Academy has sponsored 9 Congresses, in Brazil in 1989, 1993, and 1999, Chile in 1991 and 2002, Argentina in 1995, Puerto Rico in 1997, Cuba in 2004, and Mexico in 2006. A Congress in Cancun, Mexico is planned for 2008. He also was the Founding Editor of *Mechanics*. The journal provided the very useful service of publishing the contents of various mechanics oriented journals until the Internet made them easily obtainable.

In 1985 Bob and his wife Mary founded the Robert M. & Mary Haythornthwaite Foundation to support scientific research. It has provided funds for research and lectures in the United States and in England; through the Academy it provides the Founder's Prize and Grant.

Bob was born in Whitley Bay in NE England in 1922. He began his engineering career at the age of 16 as an articled pupil to a Chartered Civil Engineer and obtained a B.Sc. from Durham University in 1942. His studies at London University led to a B.Sc. in 1945 and a Ph.D. in 1952. He was a Scientific Officer in the Structures Division of the Building Research Station (UK) and later in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (UK). Bob's academic career began as a lecturer at the University of Sheffield. In 1950 he was awarded a Commonwealth Fund Fellowship for a year of study in the USA which he used to go to Brown University. He returned to Brown in 1953 to join the Engineering Department and later held professorships at the University of Michigan, Pennsylvania State University, and Temple University from which he retired in 1996.

Bob's work in mechanics was both experimental and theoretical and covered a wide range, from the plastic behavior of metallic structures to the behavior of soils. He published over 50 articles in journals such as the Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Journal of the Aeronautical Sciences, the Journal of Applied Mechanics, the Journal of the Mechanics and Physics of Solids, the Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Transactions of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the Journal of Engineering Mechanics, and in the proceedings of congresses. In addition he published over 20 technical reports, book reviews, and translations, and was the editor of the Proceedings of the Third U.S. National Congress of Applied Mechanics, three volumes of the Journal of the Engineering Mechanics Division of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the first two volumes of *Mechanics*. He supervised theses of graduate students at Brown and at the University of Michigan in addition to teaching experimental methods to students assisting in his laboratory work. Among the recognitions he received for his contribution to mechanics is a Research Prize from the American Society of Civil Engineers. The Academy awarded him a plaque in 1994 at the 25th anniversary meeting in Seattle for his leadership and dedication to the Academy. For Distinguished Service to Theoretical and Applied Mechanics, the Academy awarded him a medal in 1996. He was a Fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers and of the Academy.

I first met Bob at Brown in 1951 at the end of his year as a Commonwealth Fellow and even though busy with his arrangements for traveling back to England he very generously spent time to help me get acclimated and to meet some of his friends. Later I learned that I had followed him at King's College Newcastle, which was part of the University of Durham at that time, now a University in its own right. We were both members of the rowing club although we did not overlap. At Brown in the late 50's he showed me a paper from the Russian journal *Mekhanika i Mashinostroenie* on the plastic behavior of a plate and said that the author was using a sledgehammer to crack a walnut. So we found a much simpler way to treat the problem. Bob wrote the first draft of a paper to send to the journal. Fortunately V. V. Sokolovsky was visiting Brown for the 1958 U.S. National Congress of Applied Mechanics and he edited Bob's Russian.

His friends will remember Bob as a warm, generous person who was always interesting to talk to. His strong interest in mechanics led him to feel that he should contribute to the field and he has most certainly done that.

R. T. Shield