

R. Hal Mason (1929-2005)

A Memorial by José de la Torre

Hal Mason, Professor of Management and International Business at the Anderson School at UCLA, died on September 3, 2005, after a 19-year struggle with the ravages of two massive strokes. Hal was especially kind to me and was one of my strongest advocates when I first applied for a position at the Anderson School in the summer of 1985. He chaired the committee that recommended my appointment and I was looking forward to working closely with him upon my arrival in the fall of 1986. Alas, it was not to happen. Earlier that year he suffered the first stroke, one that left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak clearly.

Hal joined the faculty at UCLA in 1966, following his graduation from Stanford University with a PhD in international business economics. He served in Korea with the US Army after high school and later worked with the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad (now an excursion railroad) as a brakeman prior to enrolling at Colorado State University where he obtained a BS in Agricultural Economics and an MS in Economics and Statistics in 1957. He then joined the staff of the Stanford Research Institute and this led to his subsequent interest in an academic career.

At UCLA, Hal taught the entire range of business policy and international business courses at both the masters and PhD levels. He also chaired 7 doctoral dissertations and served on 18 other PhD committees. He was clearly one of the most sought out advisors by doctoral students for both his economic insights as well as for his patience and commitment. He also served on the AIB Dissertation Awards Committee for three years until 1985, and was elected Secretary of the Academy in 1986.

His research took him to the four corners of the globe, including long visits to the Philippines, Europe and Brazil. His book on The Economics of International Business (with Bob Miller and Dale Weigel), first published by Wiley in 1975, became one of the most successful standard texts in the field in three editions. They followed with International Business (1981) which also did very well. Hal published widely in fields as broad as corporate acquisitions, corporate planning, conflict resolution, multinational strategies, and, his passion, technology transfer and appropriateness. The AIB recognized his accomplishments and service by electing him to the Fellows of the Academy in 1985. His last book, Management:

An International Perspective (with Robert Spich) was published in 1987, after his illness.

As Hal's wife Kay will testify, it was his stubborn determination that brought back from that first devastating stroke and which pushed him to relearn to walk and communicate. I remember visiting with him and the enormous efforts he would make to get his points across, yelling a four letter salty expletive every time he got stuck. Eventually, with much work and considerable willpower, Hal was able to write again, including a set of stories based on his ancestors who pioneered the American West and on his railroad days, much to the delight of his grandchildren.

Those who knew Hal and worked with him remember him for his witty and sharp-eyed comments at faculty meetings, his practical relevance and sharp intellect, and his down-to-earth attitude. Hal suffered fools badly, specially pompous academics, but would give generous of his time to help younger colleagues and doctoral students. He was among the pioneers of our field and both his legacy and his memory will live for decades to come.