

IN MEMORIAM: ROBERT H. MCGUCKIN III (1942–2006)

On March 12, 2006, Robert H. McGuckin died at his home in Alexandria (Virginia, United States) after a nine month battle against cancer.

During the past 10 years, McGuckin was Director of Economic Research at The Conference Board in New York. Most members of the Association—and beyond—however, will have known Bob primarily as one of the pioneers in creating a data-infrastructure for the use of microdata at the Center of Economic Research of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Bob was Chief of the Center from 1986 to 1996, which was a crucial period in the move towards greater use of micro data for the analysis of firm dynamics, etc. The Center enables researchers to access proprietary firm-level datasets that provide new insights into the workings of the economy and the behavior of U.S. businesses. Today the Census/NSF Research Data Center network launched by McGuckin is an eight-location network of sites across the U.S. The model has been replicated in many countries across the world, and helped to set the stage for a worldwide surge in microeconomic economic research on firm level-based longitudinal databases.

In 1965, Bob obtained his B.A., cum laude, in mathematics from Ithaca College. In 1970 he received his Ph.D. in Economics from the State University of New York at Buffalo. After that he taught economics as an assistant professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara. In 1976 he joined the Antitrust Division of the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington D.C. He worked on many of the major deregulation cases of the 1980s, including the breakup of AT&T. During the 1978–79 academic year, he was named the first Victor H. Kramer Fellow at the University of Chicago School of Law.

When he became Chief of the Center for Economic Studies (CES) at the U.S. Census Bureau he headed a small group of talented economic researchers working with firm-level data underlying the census material. In addition to developing the microdata infrastructure, his own work and that of his colleagues revealed the dynamics of the U.S. business sector characterized by a high pace of entry and exit by businesses and an associated pace of job creation and job destruction. Indeed these studies set the stage for a whole battery of research projects showing that much of U.S. productivity growth is associated with this churning of businesses and jobs.

In 1996, Bob decided to widen his scope further and deal more directly with issues of relevance to the business sector and to do more global research. He became Director of Economic Research at The Conference Board, a non-partisan and non-profit group and one of the leading business membership and research organizations in the world. At The Conference Board he oversaw a broad research program, ranging from the analysis of worldwide productivity and living standards, international comparisons of the impact of ICT and R&D on productivity, business cycle indicators and macroeconomic forecasting. He authored and

co-authored many reports, and presented his research to major business, government and academic audiences across Asia, Europe and North America.

In 1992, McGuckin published an article with Sang V. Nguyen, Jeffrey R. Taylor, and Charles A. Waite in the *Review of Income and Wealth*, titled “Post-Reform Productivity Performance and Sources of Growth in Chinese Industry: 1980–85”. In this article the authors used data from the National Industrial Census of China (1988) for large and medium-size enterprises, and found that Chinese manufacturing industries experienced sharp increases in total factor productivity growth during the first half of the 1980s. This paper was perhaps one of the first documenting the vast change that the Chinese economy was embarking on since the opening up in 1978. It was therefore quite appropriate that Bob again picked up the topic on economic restructuring in China during the past couple of years at The Conference Board. He published a range of papers on firm dynamics in China, and paid numerous visits to China in preparation of the opening of a China Research Center by The Conference Board in Beijing in April 2006, shortly after he passed away.

Bob was not a frequent attendee of the IARIW conferences, but he did participate in the conference in Cork in August 2004, where he presented a paper on trends in internationalization of Research and Development. As at any other time, he then showed his skills in how to construct and, at the same time, use large databases to analyze major trends in the economy. Parts of this work will be published in 2007 in a memorial volume by the National Bureau of Economic Research in honor of the late Zvi Griliches.

Because of his numerous positions, Bob developed himself as an all-round micro- and macroeconomist who was basically interested and able to work on everything that helped to better understand how economies work in reality. This broad scope is reflected in his wide range of publications in major academic journals including *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Monthly Labor Review*, *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics*, *International Journal of Industrial Organization* and the *Review of Income and Wealth*. The publications cover a wide range of topics from industrial organization, macroeconomics, business cycle research, productivity, technology and innovation, labor economics and entrepreneurial behavior and high-performance workplace practices.

In addition to being a professional economist of excellence, Bob was a very pleasant person to deal with. His broad interests made him a great companion to everybody working with him or simply meeting with him at numerous events which he attended, or conferences where he made presentations. Bob is survived by his wife, Barbara J. Katz, two children, Robert and Catherine, and three grandchildren. He will be remembered as a colleague who left his mark on the economics profession, as a highly esteemed member of the International Association for Research in Income and Wealth, and as a friend to everyone who worked with him or knew him well.

BART VAN ARK

*University of Groningen and The Conference Board*