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Biography of Solomon S. Huebner

Harris Proschansky

Dictionary of American Biography

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DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, Publishers¹⁻²¹²⁻⁴⁸⁶⁻²⁷⁰⁰
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John A. Garraty, *Editor*

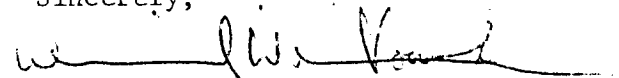
Dr. Marjorie Ames Fletcher
Director
Archives and Oral History Center
The American College
Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 19010

22 April 1980

Dear Dr. Fletcher:

Enclosed please find a copy of Harris Proschansky's article on
Solomon S. Huebner for Supplement VII of the Dictionary of American
Biography, as per his request of 17 April.

Sincerely,


David William Voorhees
Managing Editor

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900 wds

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New York, N.Y. 10028

Biography of Solomon S. Huebner

Solomon Stephen Huebner was born on a farm in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, on March 6, 1882. His parents were Frederick A. August and Wilhelmina Dickey Huebner. Two daughters died in infancy before Solomon S. Huebner was born. His brother, Grover Gerhard Huebner, was born two years later, and distinguished himself in later years as a prominent professor of transportation at the University of Pennsylvania.

Brought up on a farm, Solomon S. Huebner benefited from a sturdy rural upbringing. His scholastic and leadership abilities were early displayed at Two River High School, and he was its class valedictorian when he was graduated in 1898. He then attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and received his Bachelor of Letters degree in 1902, also winning a Phi Beta Kappa key. He earned a Master of Letters degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1903. He then earned his Ph.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1905 after receiving the Harrison Fellowship in economics. His doctoral thesis was on marine insurance.

He was married to Ethel Elizabeth Hudie, a Canadian and a teacher, in Ottawa, Canada on June 24, 1908. Of this union, a daughter, Margaret Hudie, was born in 1909, a son, John, in 1911, and two other daughters, Ethel Elizabeth and Esther Ann within the next few years.

At the time that Huebner was completing his course work and thesis for his Ph.D. degree, the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce of the University of Pennsylvania was one of only three collegiate schools of business in the United States, and it was the oldest of the three, having been founded in 1881. The classical economists of most universities at the time did not take too kindly to so called applied courses in economics. Huebner's genius for pioneering and innovation was displayed at an early stage of his career. After scrutinizing the insurance company reports of the New York Journal of Commerce, he realized that the leading business school, had no courses on insurance. Strongly impressed with the notion that insurance was an applied branch of economics, he persuaded the provost of the school to permit him to establish a course in insurance. In 1904, he became the first instructor of insurance at a salary of \$500 a year; in 1906, he was appointed professor of insurance and commerce. In 1913, when it was decided to

Biography of Solomon S. Huebner (Cont.)

establish an insurance department, he became its chairman. His distinguished career as an insurance educator at the Wharton School spanned a period of forty nine years, when he retired in 1953. He taught an estimated total of 75,000 students, to whom he was known as "Sunny Sol," because of his mild mannered and pleasant disposition, and who revered him as an inspired teacher and an excellent guide in many fields of endeavor.

Huebner was not a mere instructor. He also wrote twelve textbooks on various fields of insurance that were widely used in colleges and universities all over the United States. He also was editor or co-editor of fifteen other works on insurance and related fields.

Huebner's "Human Life Value Concept," explained in detail in "The Economics of Life Insurance," was widely employed by successive generations of insurance agents and field underwriters, who, through education and training, were in a position to diagnose the risk and insurance needs of their clients. Moreover, insurance instructors and professors in American colleges spread the concept in their courses on insurance.

A man of tremendous vigor and innovative ability, Huebner helped to establish such productive institutions as the American College of Life Underwriters in 1927, the American Institute for Property and Liability in 1944, and the American Association of University Teachers of Insurance (later known as the American Risk and Insurance Association) in 1932. Moreover, through his innumerable addresses and prolific writing, he also had a wide influence on the education and indoctrination of the public along sound lines in respect to the need for and choice of insurance plans.

As further evidence of the unusually full and rich life he led, reference should be made to his considerable role as special expert and advisor to congressional committees, the U.S. War Department, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Civil Aeronautics Board. As world traveler, he spread the "Human Life Value Concept" to the insurance academicians as well as insurance professionals in major countries in Europe, Asia and South America, as well as to Canada and Mexico.

On July 17, 1964, Huebner died of a heart attack in Merion, Wisconsin at the age of 82. During his life time, he was the recipient of

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numerous awards, honors and citations for distinguished service in many fields linked to teaching, insurance and civic works.

Widely known as the "Father of Life Insurance Education" and a teacher who changed an industry, Huebner never ^{sold} a dollar's worth of insurance himself. Nevertheless, he left an indelible imprint on the insurance industry and on many of its basic institutions.