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## **Albert Breneman Blankenship (1914-1998)**

### **A Tribute**

***By Chuck Chakrapani***

It was so long ago.

I was a young student in India and had just bought a copy of the Indian edition of a well-known book, Marketing Research Management, written by Blankenship and Doyle. At that time my English wasn't good enough to grasp fully the contents of the book, but I liked it anyway. Being so far away from North America, I never imagined that one day I would meet the authors and would even co-author a book with Al Blankenship.

Several years later I came to Canada from England in response to an offer from Donald Monk to join Canadian Facts. I began noticing Al Blankenship's name on many documents. I kept wondering if he was the same person whose book I had read when I was a student.

Not long after that I had an opportunity to meet the man himself. Like all the eminent educators I had met before, he was kind, conscientious and concerned. At that time, Professor Hal Poole was working on a lengthy paper on the history of marketing research in Canada to be published in the Canadian Journal of Marketing Research. As the editor of the Journal, I persuaded Hal Poole to expand the outline into a full-blown book which he agreed to do with Al Blankenship. But they needed someone to cover the recent period. I offered to help. Al and Hal, in an act of professional generosity, offered me the co-authorship of the book, even though my contribution, compared to theirs, was minor. The final version of A History of Marketing Research in Canada was published by the PMRS.

That would have been the end of the story if it had been anyone else. But Al Blankenship was different. Although our collaboration spanned only about a year and although a thousand miles separated us, Al always kept in touch. It flattered me to know that this larger-than-life figure in research would write on a regular basis about what was happening in his life, would invite me to his sixtieth wedding anniversary and, until his death, would keep me informed about his whereabouts and welfare. (His last postcard informing me of his new address and phone number reached me a few short weeks before he passed away.) I was pleased and honoured to meet his wife and other members of his family.

These are of course personal reminiscences. True, Al Blankenship distinguished himself both in academe and in the business world. True, he wrote many books on research. True, he received many honours for his contribution to research. Yet, in the final analysis, what made him special was his qualities as a human being: his warmth, his friendship, his professional generosity and his kindness. It is for these qualities, far more than for his extensive contributions to research, that I, as well as many others, will remember him.

I felt that I alone couldn't write an adequate tribute to match the man. So I requested two of his long time friends, Joe Doyle and Chris Commins, who knew him well to share their thoughts on Al. Robert Wong adds his professional perspective to this tribute as he talks about Al's interest in research education and the Blankenship Award, honouring the top Georgian College Research Analyst Program graduate.

Farewell our friend! We feel privileged to have known you and will miss you.

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