MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS LEONARD A. LARSON

Leonard Larson, emeritus professor of physical education, died on November 21, 2003 at his daughter’s
home in Annandale, Virginia at the age of 97. He was preceded in death by his wife Margaret and his
daughter Anne, and he is survived by his daughter Janet (Herold).

Leonard was born in Warren, Minnesota on February 2, 1906, and attended Concordia College in
Morehead, Minnesota where he received the B.A. degree in 1929 with a major in mathematics. He was a
student athlete at Concordia where he was a two-way player at end on Concordia’s first winning football
teams of 1927 and 1928. He earned all-conference honors during his senior year, and he was recognized
in 1928 as a Concordia “Honor Athlete” for his classroom and athletic achievements. He was inducted
into the Concordia Athletic Hall of Fame in 1991. His career in education began as a teacher at Pelican
Rapids High School in Minnesota from 1921-31.

Leonard next enrolled at Springfield College (Massachusetts) where he received a bachelor’s degree in
physical education and a master’s degree in education in 1933. Leonard also served as an instructor,
professor, and director of health and physical education at Springfield College from 1931-1945. During
the period he taught at Springfield College, Leonard also pursued doctoral training at New York
University where he received the Ph.D. degree in physical education in 1938. He co-authored the third
edition of his mentor J.H. McCurdy’s highly popular text, The Physiology of Exercise, the following
year.

Leonard served in the United States Air Force (USAF) from 1942-45, earning the rank of major. He was
the officer in charge of physical fitness and physical fitness research and testing procedures at USAF
Headquarters in Washington, D.C. during his military service. Following his discharge from the Air
Force, he served as a research associate at George Washington University from 1945 to 1946. This was
followed by an appointment at New York University where he held the rank of associate and full
professor from 1945 to 1960. He replaced the legendary J.B. Nash as chairman of the Department of
Physical Education at NYU in 1953. Leonard authored or co-authored 14 text books and over 60
published research papers. He also organized and edited The Encyclopedia of Sports Medicine and
Science in 1971.

Leonard Larson was recruited to the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he was appointed professor
and director of the Department of Physical Education for Men in 1959. He served in this capacity until
the close of the 1974-75 academic year, and he became an emeritus professor in 1975. During his years
at UW-Madison, Leonard coordinated efforts to develop a joint graduate program comprised of professors
from the former Department of Physical Education for Men and the Department of Physical Education for
Women. This effort resulted in one of the first Ph.D. programs in physical education offered in North
America. This joint graduate program eventually evolved into a single Department of Physical
Education, and this multi-disciplinary unit served as the foundation for the current Department of
Kinesiology. One of Leonard’s goals was to develop a strong academic unit in physical education, and he
successfully recruited leading exercise scientists in physiology, psychology, motor learning, sociology,
and sports medicine. The distinguished research faculty assembled by Chairman Larson attracted
students from all over the world, as the UW was universally recognized as the leading graduate training
program in the exercise sciences. This recruitment effort also led to the development of an exercise
program for faculty and staff, and it also served as the foundation for what has come to be known
throughout the world as cardiac rehabilitation.

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Leonard was also responsible for having the Central Office of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the leading scientific and professional organization in exercise and sport science, relocated from Ann Arbor, Michigan to UW-Madison in the late nineteen sixties. The ACSM Central Office was housed on the third floor of Camp Randall Stadium for a number of years, and the highly acclaimed journal, *Medicine and Science in Exercise and Sports*, was started in those humble surroundings. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) was established in 1954, and Leonard was one of the original founders. He was also the last of the surviving founders of this remarkable organization. Leonard served as president of ACSM from 1969-70. His many contributions to the field of sports medicine in general and ACSM in particular have been truly impactful. He received the ACSM Citation Award in 1973 and the Honor Award in 1978.

Leonard and Margaret moved to North Dakota following his retirement from UW-Madison, and he remained physically active gardening and maintaining his land and fruit trees. When interviewed by the ACSM historian, Dr. Jack Berryman, on his 97th birthday, Leonard stated that: “It was physically working that has kept me alive this long.”

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