

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

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS CARL OLSON**

Carl Olson, professor emeritus, Department of Animal Health and Biomedical Sciences, School of Veterinary Medicine, died at the age of 91 on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where he had lived with his son Robert and his family. He is survived by his four children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife of 58 years, Elizabeth in 1992.

Carl Olson was born in Sac City, Iowa, attended high school there and went on to Iowa State University where he received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in 1931. From ISU, he went to the Mayo Clinic where he worked with distinguished faculty in comparative pathology and was awarded his MS in 1934 and his PhD in 1935 through the University of Minnesota. At the Mayo Clinic, he became interested in the transmissible tumor of chickens caused by a filterable agent described in 1909 by Peyton Rous. The significance of Rous' discovery was not broadly recognized until much later but it was the base from which Olson's research on transmissible tumors took off with his first publication in this area in 1934. In January 1940 he published a report that fowl paralysis associated with avian leukosis was transmissible.

He was an assistant professor of pathology at the New York State College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University and professor of veterinary science at the University of Massachusetts from 1936 until 1945 except for a 3 year term of active duty in the Army Veterinary Corps as a captain. He continued in the reserves and retired as a lieutenant colonel after 29 years in the reserves.

In 1945, he was appointed professor and head of the Department of Animal Pathology and Hygiene at the University of Nebraska. At Nebraska, he was instrumental in the postwar growth of the department and the development of the graduate program. Dr. Olson was appointed as professor of Veterinary Science, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in 1956, served as the department chairman from 1957 until 1964 and as professor emeritus in 1981. During his tenure on this campus he made major contributions to both animal and human health.

His major research before WWII was on the transmissible tumors of poultry and his investigations into avian leukosis led him to publish the definitive treatise on avian hematology; the illustrations are still used today. At Nebraska, he began to investigate the oncogenic potential of bovine papilloma virus. This research was greatly expanded during his tenure at Wisconsin and included investigations of the relationship of the bovine virus to the cancer-causing viruses of humans. He and his students made major contributions to the discovery of the bovine leukemia viruses and the development of diagnostic tests and control strategies for that disease.

During his chairmanship of the Department of Veterinary Science, a grant from the National Institutes of Health matched with funds from WARF and individual grants made possible the construction of the present Animal Health and Biomedical Sciences building. He fostered the expansion of the graduate student training program by securing the first NIH training grant in pathology and then stimulated his colleagues to obtain two additional training grants in addition to their research grants. He published more than 250 papers during this career while training 27 graduate students from all over the world.

As a scientist, he had a strong international reputation; as a professor he was recognized by his students and new faculty members for his genuine appreciation of science and remembered for his "father figure"

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presence and help. Retirement did not diminish his eagerness to continue to work and stimulate many other laboratories including the NIH in pursuit of solving the many mysteries of virus-induced cancers in animals and humans.

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