

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS ODIN ANDERSON

Odin Waldemar Anderson, professor in the Department of Sociology from 1980 to 1995, died early on the morning of March 18, 2003, at the age of 88, in Apalachicola, Florida, where he and his wife of some 63 years, Helen Hay Anderson, had been living for the past seven years with their daughter, Kristin Anderson. Born July 5, 1914, in Minneapolis, Odin was orphaned at the age of two and raised by relatives on a small family dairy farm in rural Blair, Wisconsin. He spoke Norwegian before English, and would tell stories about skiing to his country school, which was several miles away from his home. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees (1937 and 1938) from UW-Madison and a B.A. in library science (1940) and his Ph.D. degree in sociology (1948) from the University of Michigan. While at Michigan, Odin became the first sociologist to work in a school of public health, helping to establish a research program in medical care and a health services research library. In 1949 he took a tenure-track associate professor position in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Western Ontario, Canada – again the first sociologist to hold such a position. There he studied social epidemiology and began to study the utilization of physician services.

In 1952, he became research director of the Health Information Foundation (HIF), a non-profit research agency in New York. While there he developed a highly successful research program based on comparisons of the operation of health services delivery systems and health insurance. In 1962 when HIF, renamed the Center for Health Administration Studies (CHAS), moved to Chicago, he continued to serve as its research director but also became a professor in the Department of Sociology and the Graduate School of Business. In 1980, having reached the then mandatory retirement age of 65 at the University of Chicago, he joined the Wisconsin Department of Sociology on a half-time appointment and continued to teach and do research at CHAS. In this last period of his research career he remained incredibly productive. He wrote a book on the health services of seven countries, wrote a history of the development of American health services since 1875, and conducted a health-maintenance organization study in Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago. He never forgot his Norwegian roots; his last publication, in 1993, was a translation of a 19th century study by Eilert Sundt on sexual customs in rural Norway.

Odin has been called a “worthy candidate for ‘the father of medical sociology.’” He was awarded the title Distinguished Medical Sociologist by the Section on Medical Sociology, American Sociological Association (1980), and the title Distinguished Health Services Researcher by the Association of Health Services Research (1985). He was further honored for his research on access to health care in 1999 when he and Ronald Andersen were selected joint winners of the Baxter Allegiance Foundation Prize for Health Services Research, considered the highest research honor in the field. In accepting that prize, Ronald Andersen said, “I feel especially privileged to be jointly recognized with my long-time mentor and colleague. The acknowledgment of our work emphasizes the importance of continuing to examine the generic characteristics of health services systems and fundamental determinants of health services utilization in order to better understand and address the current problems our system faces.” A long-time colleague at Wisconsin thinks his unique contribution to medical sociology was his interest in blending an emphasis on individual health behavior with the structural problems of the U.S. health care system. She says, “His work on European health systems helped us all understand the contrasts with the U.S. system.”

Odin was granted honorary degrees from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Uppsala, Sweden (1977), and the College of Osteopathic Medicine, Chicago (1979). He was an advisor to over 500 consultants and administrators of hospitals and medical care plans in practically every state of the union and numerous foreign countries. He mentored graduate students who subsequently worked in over thirty universities in the U.S. and abroad, as well as numerous others who worked in governmental and non-governmental agencies.

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Odin had a passion for teaching, once telling Ronald Andersen that he salivated when he saw a classroom. A student late in his career at Wisconsin says, "Odin always seemed to conjure up the most relevant reflection during any discussion, one that made the rest of us sit up and take notice. It was that ability to glean a concept down to its most basic components that I will always remember about his intellect." She also lauded his support for women graduate students. We will fondly remember his legendary harmonica playing including Norwegian dance tunes, American jazz and blues, and his wonderful sense of humor and entertaining stories.

In addition to his wife and daughter, he is survived by his son Thor Edwin Anderson and a granddaughter, Ashley Anderson.

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