

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

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS FRANK C. LARSON**

Frank C. Larson, MD, age 87, professor emeritus of medicine and pathology and of laboratory medicine, died on December 25, 2007. He was born in Columbus, Nebraska, on January 17, 1920, to Albin V. and Wilhelmina (Herold) Larson. Frank graduated from Peru State College (Peru, Nebraska) in 1941. He obtained his MD degree from the University of Nebraska College of Medicine in Omaha in December 1944. From January to September 1945, he interned at Detroit (Michigan) Receiving Hospital and then was called to active duty in the U.S. Army.

During his tour of military duty, he was assigned to the *Manhattan Engineer District*—the joint effort of the United States, United Kingdom and Canada to develop nuclear weapons for use in World War II. His military training in nuclear physics took him to Oak Ridge, the Fermi Laboratory, Berkeley, and Los Alamos. He participated in *Operation Crossroads*—the July 1946 atomic bomb testing at Bikini Atoll in the mid-Pacific. His assignment was to fly into the area immediately after detonation to monitor radiation levels. David Bradley, one of his comrades, wrote of their experience in the book *No Place to Hide*. The book was reprinted in 1984.

After completing military service, he resumed his medical training at the University of Wisconsin, first as a research fellow in endocrinology under Dr. Edgar Gordon, then as a resident in internal medicine. When the Madison Veteran's Administration Hospital opened in 1951, he was one of its three original physicians. Frank's responsibilities were head of medical research, assistant chief of Medical and Tuberculosis Services, and acting chief of Radioactive Isotope Services.

His previous experience with radioactivity influenced his early research on the use of radioactive isotopes in medical diagnosis. Through his role in the tuberculosis service, he worked with Dr. Helen Dickie in the clinical testing of the drug isoniazide, which revolutionized the treatment of tuberculosis. Pioneering research done with Dr. Edwin Albright provided insight into the structure, function, and metabolism of the thyroid hormone.

He was a member of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin Medical School from 1951 until his retirement in 1989, during which he advanced from assistant to full professor. In 1958, Dean John Z. Bowers created the first consolidated hospital clinical laboratory service and appointed Dr. Larson as its director. Frank served as the medical director of the University Hospital Clinical Laboratory for 30 years. In addition to his administrative responsibilities, he routinely taught medical students and continued his clinical practice in endocrinology and general internal medicine. As director of the clinical laboratories, his primary focus was laboratory medicine. He was one of the pioneers in introducing automated instrumentation and computers in the clinical laboratory. He worked with DuPont Instruments to develop highly innovative chemistry analyzers. Under his leadership, the University Hospital Clinical Laboratory became one of the outstanding hospital laboratories in the United States. One of Frank's positive attributes was that he valued each member of the laboratory staff, and the laboratory was the resource for the physicians to manage their patients.

With new laboratory automation available, he introduced a hospital policy whereby a patient being admitted to the hospital automatically had blood samples collected for a panel of tests. The result of this change in which an admission panel of laboratory test results were available to the physician immediately was that the average patient's hospital stay was reduced by one and one-half days. Moreover, the screening revealed diseases before symptoms arose, which allowed earlier medical intervention and better health outcomes.

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He was called upon to serve the university in many other ways: as director of the Medical Technology Program, acting dean of the School of Allied Health Professions, acting chairman of the Department of Pathology, and as a member of numerous committees. For several years he chaired the University Radiation Safety Committee that reviewed campus research projects that required the use of radioactive reagents. From 1987 to 1989 he served as mentor to the Medical School Class of 1991. He was a fellow of the American College of Physicians. He published many academic papers, contributed chapters for books, and received several national honors, including American Men of Science (Biological Sciences), Who's Who in America, and a professional achievement award from the DuPont Company. In 2004 he received the Clinical Sciences Emeritus Faculty Award from the University of Wisconsin Medical Alumni Association.

His interests extended beyond medicine. He was a highly accomplished woodworker, designing and building contemporary furniture. He enjoyed literature, poetry, classical music, architecture, visual arts, cooking, gardening, raising orchids, visiting with friends, and most of all, time shared with his wife, family and beloved German Shepherd dog, Gigi. He was an extraordinary man who deeply valued his service in the army, yet during the Vietnam conflict welcomed conscientious objectors as members of the laboratory staff.

His parents and his sister, Helen Seiger, formerly of Silver Spring, Maryland, preceded him in death. He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Myrna Traver Larson; his sister, Leonore Graf, of Easton, Connecticut; three children from his previous marriage to June Herling Quinn: Karen Larson, Alan (Laurie) Larson, and Donn (Patricia) Larson; six grandchildren; three nieces; and a nephew.

His family, friends, colleagues will dearly miss him, along with many people whose lives he influenced.

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