Memorial Resolution for Professor Manfred Olson

Manfred Olson was born of immigrant parents on April 3, 1903, on Wisconsin farm land near Black River Falls and died December 11, 1966, in Milwaukee. He had four brothers and a sister.

He began his high school studies late at seventeen because he had stopped to help work the farm and because an illness which recurred throughout his life required early hospitalization. He wasn't bedfast during his treatment, so he began to learn nursing and to earn the cost of his treatment. At Bethel Academy he met the girl, Angeline Precik, whom he married seven years later. He went on to a small college in Michigan and, in the summers, worked as a nurse in Battle Creek. He and his wife came to Milwaukee to finish college at Milwaukee State Teachers where he was elected to Kappa Delta Pi and Honor Ten; and he began teaching there in 1931. He attended the University of Michigan during the summers and earned a Master of Science in 1935. In 1939, he did a year of study at the University of Chicago and returned from there to resume his work at the teachers college.

Mr. Olson was a Visiting Professor at the University of Wisconsin during the summer of 1943 and worked on the Manhattan Project at the University of Chicago Metallurgical Laboratory the following summer. In 1943, he also served as Coordinator of the Air Force Training Program at Milwaukee State Teachers College. He became Chairman of the Physics Department and served for many years in this capacity until merger action formed UWM. Meanwhile, he had been away as a Senior Physicist at Los Alamos, New Mexico, where he had worked on Geiger counter systems from 1947 to 1949; been on leave at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, during the summer of 1952; and become Professor of Physics in 1956. For reasons of health, he retired as Emeritus Professor in 1963. During the past year, his general health improved; and he was happily lecturing at and serving as director of the planetarium, an assignment which satisfied both his belief that the University should have such a device and his efforts to get one there, and which did not make the taxing requirements on him that regular teaching did.

At various times, during his association with the College and University, Professor Olson guided the Camera Club; acted as a Science Fraternity Delta Chi Sigma officer and as President of the Wisconsin Association of Physics Teachers; and served on the Milwaukee Civil Defense Committee on Radioactivity and such school groups as the Science Building Committee and the Improvement of Teaching Committee; he was also a member of the Milwaukee Astronomical Society, the Wisconsin Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Association of University Professors, the American Association of Physics Teachers and its Wisconsin chapter, and the Milwaukee Physics Club. He gave extra-curricular lectures on civil defense, atomic energy, and astronomy and once won a prize for a teaching device at the Iowa Colloquium of College Physics Teachers. He was a member of the Milwaukee Players and a lay preacher in the Unitarian Church where he gave expression to the constant interplay of science and religion in his mind.

During his many years as a faculty member, Manfred Olson was a positive, constructive force in the many phases of development from the originally separate Wisconsin State College and University of Wisconsin Extension Division to the present UWM. He held fast to his opinions against opposition, but had that ready flexibility to change which only true open-mindedness permitted. His integrity was unquestioned. He was friendly to those who would be friendly, helpful to those who would be helped, easily available but never obtrusive, appropriately decisive and severe when he thought it necessary. Whether or not they agreed with him, he was held in deserved esteem and fondness by both his students and colleagues. His was a lifetime of service and directed activity.
Mr. Olson is survived by his wife Angeline; a daughter, Mrs. Dan M. (Susan Ann) Matson, Madison; two brothers, Benjamin Nelson, St. Petersburg, Florida, and Torfin Nelson, Tampa, Florida; and a sister, Mrs. Agnes Haralson, Lake Linden, Michigan.

Earnest A. Bellis
Robert E. Norris
Raymond W. Suchy
Harvey A. Uber