Reported Deaths

Russell E. Larson, provost emeritus and professor emeritus of the Pennsylvania State Univ., died 30 Nov. 2005 near his long time home in State College, Pa.

Larson was a former ASHS president (1964) and a fellow of the society (elected in 1965). Larson was born in Minneapolis, Minn., on 2 Jan. 1917. He received from the Univ. of Minnesota a BS degree in agriculture (1939) and MS (1940) and PhD (1942) degrees in genetics and breeding.

Larson's career in teaching, research, and administration began as an assistant professor at the Univ. of Rhode Island (1941). He joined the Dept. of Horticulture at Pennsylvania State Univ. as assistant professor of plant breeding (1944) and rapidly moved through the academic ranks, achieving full professor in 1947. As his leadership skills were recognized, he subsequently moved through the administrative ranks at the university. His administrative appointments included department head (1952), associate dean and director of cooperative extension (1962), dean of the college of agriculture and director of the cooperative extension service and the agricultural experiment station (1963). He was chosen as provost of the university in 1972. He retired from the university in 1977 with the rank of professor emeritus of horticulture and provost emeritus. Since his retirement he has continued to serve as a science adviser for the American Cocoa Research Institute and was a frequent visitor to the Dept. of Horticulture, where he retained an office.

While department head, Larson recognized the need for a long-term commitment from the university for a farm to serve part of the research needs of olericulture, pomology, plant breeding, plant nutrition, and ornamental horticulture. Larson was authorized by the university president to seek land for a new research farm because the university needed more classrooms and housing to serve the huge influx of students in the decades after World War II and more and more of the field research areas on campus were being used for this purpose. Larson's hard work, perseverance and negotiations helped the university purchase in 1956 three contiguous farms near the university totaling about 150 acres. In 1965, the same family that sold the land in 1956 was convinced by Larson to sell the two adjoining farms bringing the total farmland to 450 acres. As college dean, he acquired two more farms and the university made additional purchases in the 1990s expanding the research center to about 2,000 acres. Collectively, the university Board of Trustees dedicated the farms in 1990 as the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center. The Larson Research Center is a premiere research center for plant science research and is host to the Horticulture Farm, Agronomy Farm, Plant Pathology Farm, and Entomology Farm at Pennsylvania State Univ. where innovative and groundbreaking research continues to be conducted. It is also the location of Pennsylvania State Univ. Annual Ag Progress Days.

Among the many appointments and honors received by Larson were the Leonard H. Vaughan Research Award (1949), Univ. of Minnesota Outstanding Achievement (1961), Chairman, Commission on Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (NCR-NAS (1966-70), member of the Board of Overseers of the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University (1968-74), fellow of American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) (1971), and the John E. Wilkinson Administrative Excellence at Pennsylvania State University (1976). Pennsylvania State Univ. made him an honorary alumnus in 1977, an honor awarded to only 25 others at the time.

Larson's influence as a horticulturist extended beyond Pennsylvania and the U.S. He served as a consultant on tomato breeding and seed production in Cuba and spent 6 months in Mexico working with the Rockefeller Foundation as an advisor conducting plant explorations. He also spent 6 weeks in Argentina as a consultant on fruit breeding and production with the Instituto Nacional de Tecnologia Agropecuaria.

Larson is survived by his wife, Margaret A. "Peggy" Larson; two daughters, Gayle M. Larson and Beverly J. Fetcko; and a son, Russell T. "Rusty" Larson; along with seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Ernest L. Bergman

Richard Craig

Dennis R. Decoteau

Pennsylvania State University, University Park