

**Career Highlights and Potential Talking Points
for Introduction to Olaf Larson Welcome Video**

75th Anniversary of RSS

- Born 1910 on a farm in Rock County, Wisconsin
- Parents were tenant farmer (livestock and tobacco) until became owner of farm about 1935
- Graduated from a one-room elementary school in 1923
- Left farm in 1928 to attend University of Wisconsin

- 1932 – Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Journalism with additional work in soils and agronomy
- 1933 – Masters degree in Agricultural Journalism with supplementary courses in agricultural economics
- After attending the University of MN for a year, Olaf was on faculty at Colorado State College A&M. 1935 – Assistant professor; 1937 – Associate Professor
- 1937 – Became member of the newly established Rural Sociological Society

- 1938 – began work for the USDA where he remained until 1946. Olaf worked in the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life of the USDA's Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The Division was the first and for a time the only unit of the federal government devoted to sociological research.
- 1941 – Ph.D. in Rural Sociology University of Wisconsin

- 1946 – Joined faculty at Cornell University as Associate Professor.
- 1949 – Promoted to full Professor, Cornell University
- 1949-1950 – Chairman, Ad Hoc Research Committee's project Committee on Agricultural Policy, Rural Sociological Society
- 1950-1954 – Associate Editor, *Rural Sociology*
- 1951-1952 - Fulbright Scholar (Oslo, Norway)
- 1951-1952 - Vice President, Rural Sociological Society
- 1954 – Elected to the Sociological Research Association
- 1957-1958 – President, Rural Sociological Society
- 1957-1966 – Head of Dept of Rural Sociology, Cornell University
- 1960-61 – Chairman, Committee on the Development of Rural Sociology, Rural Sociological Society
- 1961-1962 – Fulbright Scholar (Naples, Italy)
- Vice Chair, Committee of International Cooperation in Rural Sociology (committee organized the First World Congress of Rural Sociology and led to the subsequent creation of the International Rural Sociological Association)
- 1972-1975 – First Director of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development
- While at Cornell, major work emphases included conducting community studies, rural health resources, migratory farm labor, rural values and beliefs, and conducted population studies.

- 1975 - Retired from Cornell University
- 1979-1980 – member of Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Rural America, Rural Sociological Society

- 1985 – Distinguished Rural Sociologist, Rural Sociological Society
- Publications include:
 - 11 book chapters
 - 60 plus articles in journals, proceedings, and periodicals
 - Includes articles in *Social Forces*, *ASR*, *AJS* and 13 articles in *Rural Sociology*
 - 157 Bulletins
 - Olaf’s research was also included in the 1955 Congressional Hearings before the SubCommittee on Low Income Families and the 1958 New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Migratory Labor.
- Books since retired in 1975 include (not including journal and other articles):
 - **The Sociology of Agriculture** (Larson is second author with Fred Buttel as lead and Gil Gillespie) – Greenwood Press. 1990.
 - “Published to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Rural Sociological Society, this monograph analyzes the nearly 90 years of rural sociological research on agriculture and provides a comprehensive overview of changing research focuses and theoretical approaches.”
 - **Sociology in Government: A Bibliography of the U. S. Department of Agriculture’s Division of Farm Population and Rural Life**. (Larson is first Author with Edward O. Moe and Julie N. Zimmerman). Westview Press. 1992. (Published in cooperation with the American Sociological Association and the Rural Sociological Society. Rural Studies Series.)
 - **Sociology in Government: The Galpin-Taylor Years in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1919–1953** (Larson is first author, with Julie N. Zimmerman and assisted by Edward O. Moe) – Penn State Press. 2003. (Published in cooperation with the American Sociological Association and the Rural Sociological Society. Rural Studies Series.)
 - “The most significant contribution of this book is its ability to provide roots for contemporary rural sociologists, especially those housed in land grant universities or federal government agencies or those holding extension appointments. It provides history and context for our work, and shows the relevance and potential contribution of applied, policy-related research.”
Kathryn Brasier, *Rural Sociology*
 - **Opening Windows onto Hidden Lives: Women, Country Life, and Early Rural Sociological Research** (Larson is second Author, with Julie N. Zimmerman) – Penn State Press. 2010
 - “*Opening Windows onto Hidden Lives* is essential reading for anyone interested in rural women's studies, and particularly rural women's history. Zimmerman and Larson have painstakingly excavated a treasure trove of materials vital to an informed understanding of American farm women in the first half of the twentieth century. Although the work in its entirety is impressive and very useful, the annotated bibliography alone makes the book worth reading.” — Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, Iowa State University; author of *Childhood on the Farm: Work, Play, and Coming of Age in the Midwest*
 - “In this, their third book on the subject, Julie Zimmerman and pioneering rural sociologist Olaf Larson once again shed light on the often forgotten scholarship of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life, which conducted groundbreaking social science research. As in their previous collaborations, Zimmerman and Larson document the wide-ranging nature of Division

scholarship, focusing this time on studies that discuss the activities of rural and farm women. Their diligence in locating the rich data on women in Division reports is particularly impressive because most of this information is embedded within larger studies of rural living standards, farm labor and wages, and rural social organization. The book's thorough bibliographic section and its reproduction of significant primary documents, including a 1924 report that was the Division's only exclusive study of farm women, make it an invaluable resource for rural sociologists and historians of rural America." —Katherine Jellison, Ohio University; author of *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913–1963*.

- **When Horses Pulled the Plow: Life of a Wisconsin Farm Boy, 1910–1929**. University of Wisconsin Press – 2011.
 - “When Horses Pulled the Plow is Larson’s account of that rural life in the early twentieth century. He weaves invaluable historical details—including descriptions of farm equipment, crops, and livestock—with wry tales about his family, neighbors, and the one-room schoolhouse he attended, revealing the texture of everyday life in the rural Midwest almost a century ago.” -- Robert J. Gough, University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, author of *Farming the Cutover*
- From Comments on Olaf F. Larson Distinguished Rural Sociologist Award Recipient in 1985 (TRS 5(5):363-364 (by Donald Voth):
 - “A quick and probably incomplete count [of graduate students] total 61 for whom he was a major advisor and there were at least 85 more for whom he served on the graduate committee.”
 - “Like his research themes, [Larson’s career after his retirement], reflects ... issues about which the USDA and the land-grant system have never felt comfortable – rural poverty and stratification, small-farm problems, the inadequacy of rural services, and others
- Graduate students whose PhD was overseen by Olaf include names familiar in RSS (including past presidents) such as Harold Capener, Edward O. Moe, Helen Abell, Louis Ploch, Minnie Brown, Lee Coleman, Odd Grande, and Harry Schwarzweller.
- His last PhD student completed their degree in 1980.
- Though he did not serve in an official capacity, in 1988, Larson took under his wing his final student: Julie N. Zimmerman
- Reflecting his tremendous support for students, not only has he set up awards and assistance for students at Cornell University and the University of Wisconsin, in 2010, the RSS Graduate Student Paper Award was re-named in his honor