

## **A Biography of Leonard W. Ferguson**

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April 2016

Leonard Wilton Ferguson was born in Turlock, California in 1912. He majored in Philosophy and Psychology at Stanford University, receiving his B.A. in 1933, his M.A. in 1935, and his Ph.D. in 1942.

In early 1939, while still completing his Ph.D., Ferguson worked as an Instructor in Psychology at what was then Connecticut State College in Hartford, Connecticut, for the handsome salary of \$2,040 per year. During this time, he met Edith Beverly Phemister, who worked in the Registrar's office, and the two married on July 1, 1939. The couple had three daughters, Barbara Jean Ferguson Needham, Margaret Alice Ferguson Gibson, and Kathryn Louise Ferguson McCarthy.

In 1943, Ferguson resigned from what was by then the University of Connecticut and went to work for the Field Training and Field Management Divisions of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. There he presided over research and development in the areas of selection, appraisal, aptitude and testing, as well as other aspects of the life insurance industry.

After more than 20 years in the insurance industry, in 1965 Dr. Ferguson returned to academia, this time at Ohio University. He remained in this position until his retirement in 1977. At this point he and Edith moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts, and completed a history of Provincetown, a project they had begun together many years prior. This was published in a series entitled *Cape Cod Collection*. They later moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, where they continued to research and publish together, in such areas as developmental and social psychology.

Leonard Ferguson had an avid interest in history. In 1958, a committee on the Early History of the Business and Industrial Division was established by then President of Division 14 Charles H. Lawshe. There were five sections written by Doug Fryer and Harold Burt entitled "The Organization of Business and Industrial Psychology in the United States" (Committee on the Early History of the Business and Industrial Division of the American Psychological Association, 1960). Leonard W. Ferguson was supposed to write a sixth section about Division 14. However, Ferguson was impeded by the lack of information available coupled with

inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the material that he could find, and he convinced Lawshe to permit him to write a history of industrial psychology instead (Lawshe, June 24, 1958). Ferguson proceeded to produce his seminal series of 14 pamphlets entitled *Heritage of Industrial Psychology*. Leonard Ferguson's archives are currently in the possession of Carnegie Mellon University.

Ferguson was a member of the American Psychological Association, a Fellow in the Business and Industrial Division, and an Associate in the Evaluation and Measurement Division. He was a Diplomate in Industrial Psychology, American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology, and served as Chairman of the Clerical Salary Study Committee of the Life Office Management Association. He served as President of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology in 1955-56. Leonard W. Ferguson died on July 9, 1988, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

## References

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