

## Obituary for E. Leonard Jossem

E. Leonard Jossem was born May 19, 1919 in Camden, N.J., and died on Saturday August 29, 2009 at The Ohio State University Hospital.

Professor Jossem was associated with The Ohio State University Physics Department for 53 years, serving as Chair from 1967-80. His lifelong devotion to the teaching of physics ran the gamut from his frequent hands-on demonstration “The Physics of Toys” for elementary and high school students to his 40 years of leading U.S. and international movements that molded today’s physics education and physics education research. Just six weeks prior to his death, he hosted a luncheon and dinner for visiting Chinese physics colleagues and their undergraduate students,

He provided leadership for the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council as a member of the Physics and Astronomy board: U.S. Liaison Committee for the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP), and on the Physics Survey Committee. He served on the U.S. National Advisory Committee on Education, which made professional development recommendations to the President and the U.S. Congress.

His global participation also included serving as chair of the IUPAP International Commission on Physics Education (ICPE), as a member of the Teaching of Science Committee of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), on UNESCO’s Physics Action Council and on the National Science Teachers Association Committee on International Relations.

Professor Jossem provided significant leadership for the 11,000-member American Association of Physics Teachers, holding more than 11 elected and committee positions during 61 years of service and as AAPT President from 1973-74.

He was a Fellow and Life Member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and served on the AAAS Physics Council. His 24 years of service to the American Institute of Physics (AIP) included serving on four committees as well as its governing board.

Beginning in the 1980s, he began building physics education collaborations with Chinese universities and is an honorary professor at Southeast University, Nanjing, PRC; Beijing Teachers College and Beijing Normal University, both in Beijing, PRC.

Additional professional and honorary society affiliations include: Fellow of the American Physical Society; Life Fellow of the London Royal Society of Arts; Fellow of the London Institute of Physics; The New York Academy of Sciences; Indian Association of Physics Teachers; American Society of Engineering Education; American Educational Research Association; Groupe International de Research sur l’Enseignement de la Physique; Sigma Pi Sigma; Sigma Xi and Phi Kappa Phi.

Professor Jossem served on the Educational Testing Service's Graduate Record Exam (GRE) Committee of Examiners for the Advanced Test in Physics. His numerous awards and honors include the IUPAP International Commission on Physics Education Medal of Excellence, the AAPT's prestigious Melba Newell Phillips Award that has been given only 11 times as well as AAPT's Distinguished Service Citation, and its Oersted Medal, plus The Ohio State University Distinguished Service Award in 2001.

Throughout his career, he continued writing books, having refereed papers published and giving invited talks at international conferences. He was the editor of the International Commission on Physics Education book, *Connecting the Results of Research in Physics Education with Teacher Education* and was a co-editor of the IUPAP compendium *Physics 2000: Physics As It Enters a New Millennium*.

During World War II, Professor Jossem served as a staff scientist at Los Alamos National Lab and worked on the Manhattan Project. He received his B.S. degree from The City College of New York (CCNY) and his M.S. and PhD degrees from Cornell University.

Professor Jossem is survived by a sister, Marjorie J. Block, a niece, Nancy Brennan (William), a nephew, Stacy Block (Lynn) all of Haddonfield, N.J.; his grand niece, Lori Brennan of Philadelphia; his grand nephew Jeff Brennan (Lisa) and their children Jonathan and Michael, all of Voorhees, N.J., and his long time companion, Kay Smith of Columbus.

He was a devoted son whose loving parents strongly supported his education. "How do things work?" was one of favorite childhood questions. It led to a lifelong curiosity particularly about the mechanics of toys. Professor Jossem would demonstrate a simple toy to some of the world's best scientists and ask them to explain the physics involved. Many times they were totally stumped. He also encouraged informal gatherings to build human relationships and personally funded the lunches associated with the OSU Physics Education Research Group's forum for guest speakers, students and faculty.

Professor Jossem was a gentleman whose wisdom inspired many. He was kind to his friends and colleagues. If there was a disagreement, his suggestions were so well stated that the participants felt good about changing their minds. His advice was always connected to reality and his demeanor crossed cultures to win him friends around the world. His dedication to physics education was a tribute to the man and his curiosity and his love of play. He was always ready with a pertinent quote or a paper that made a salient point that others might have missed. His advice was deeply valued.

There will be a celebration of Professor Len Jossem's life on Saturday October 3 at 2 p.m. in the atrium of the OSU Physics Research Building at 191 West Woodruff Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210. Memorials may be sent to the E. Leonard Jossem Physics Education Advancement Fund in care of the Physics Department address. The Fund will provide scholarships for OSU physics students.