

## **MEMORIAL RESOLUTION**

### **LEWIS MADISON TERMAN (1877 – 1956)**

Lewis Madison Terman, who died on December 21, 1956, was born January 15, 1877 in Johnson County, Indiana of mixed Scotch-Irish, Welsh, German, and French stock. A farm boy who soon outgrew his one-room school, he was an introspective lad who has stated in his autobiography that he performed his first psychological experiment at age 11. In the '90s one of the few ways to escape the farm was to prepare for high school teaching. This Terman did by attending the Central Normal College of Danville, Indiana, where he received a BS in 1896, a BEd in 1897, and an AB in 1898. After teaching the entire curriculum of a four-year high school for several years, he had saved enough to enter Indiana University, where he received another AB in 1902 and an AM in 1903.

Already twelve hundred dollars in debt, married, and the father of two children, Terman borrowed twelve hundred more and enrolled in Clark University for graduate work in psychology and education. Here he was greatly stimulated by such teachers as G. Stanley Hall, William Burnham, and Edmund Sanford, and, through his reading, by the great personages of psychology and the allied sciences, particularly Sir Francis Galton, Alfred Binet, and Havelock Ellis. Though suffering from tuberculosis, a disease that bothered him occasionally for many years, he obtained a PhD in 1905.

Advised to seek a mild climate, Terman limited his search for a position to the South and Southwest. Three offers soon materialized -- the presidency of a struggling Florida normal school, a one-year position at the University of Texas, and the principalship of a high school in San Bernadino, California. After considerable indecision he accepted the last and remained a principal for a year. He then moved to the Los Angeles State Normal School where, for four years, he was Professor of Child Study and Pedagogy. His health improved steadily in Los Angeles, so that in 1910, when he had the opportunity to come to Stanford as Professor of Educational Psychology in the then Department of Education, he was physically able to embark on the rigorous work schedule he was to follow most of his remaining years.

Professor Terman's accomplishments during the next 46 years were very great indeed. His first major undertaking was the revision of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale, which he published in 1916. This revision, commonly called the "Stanford-Binet," not only brought fame to Terman but made the name "Stanford" a schoolhouse word throughout the English-speaking world. It became, from the beginning, the standard against which other proposed measures of intelligence were gauged. For 22 years, until Terman and Dr. Maud Merrill (James) prepared the still more elegant 1937 Revision, the label IQ was universally understood to refer to a measurement obtained by use of the 1916 Stanford-Binet.

Terman also cooperated with Otis in the construction of the first group intelligence test. This scale became the basis for the Army Alpha intelligence test which was developed by Terman and several of his colleagues during the First World War. The extraordinary success and usefulness of these objective measures of ability led Professor Terman to question whether something could not be done to improve the chaotic state of

the measurement of school achievement. When he returned to Stanford after his tour of military service in Washington, he began the development of the Stanford Achievement Tests, which, like the 1916 Revision of the Binet in the field of ability testing, became the forerunners and models for all later objective measures of school achievement.

These several years of instrument construction brought forcibly to Terman's attention the great range of abilities among men. More and more he concerned himself with the question of how the gifted individuals of our society could be detected and nurtured, and how they could be brought to fulfill their promise as leaders and innovators. In 1920 he began his longitudinal study of some 1,500 intellectually gifted children, a study that has provided the primary source of today's detailed knowledge of the development of persons with high intelligence. In the course of 36 years of following the behavior and achievements of this group of gifted children – all of whom are now in middle age themselves – Terman and his several collaborators published five major volumes and several dozen technical papers reporting their findings. There is precious little known about the gifted that was not discovered by Lewis Terman.

Never content with achievement in one area, however, he turned his attention to an entirely different one in the 1930s. He became curious about marriage as a psychological phenomenon, and conducted an extensive study of several hundred marital couples. His findings, published in 1938, contributed notably to our empirical knowledge of the social psychological aspects of marriage in American society. More than a decade before Kinsey reported on male sexual behavior, Terman had collected detailed information on sex activity in marriage.

After his official retirement in 1942, Professor Terman returned to his first love, the study of the gifted. In the fifteen years terminating just before his eightieth birthday, he completed several follow-up studies of the group and published a number of important reports on the differential success of various subgroups of the population. At the time of his death, he was working vigorously on still another volume and on plans for a major follow-up to be begun two years hence.

Happily, it can be recorded that Lewis Terman's accomplishments brought him the respect and fame he so fully earned. He was elected President of the American Psychological Association in 1923, and was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a Member of the National Academy of Science. But perhaps the symbol of success that gave him the greatest pleasure of all was the fact that after 36 years of research with his cherished group of gifted subjects, over 90 per cent of those still living were in close and continuing contact with him and were still enthusiastically helping him to fill in the picture of what happens to the lives of those whom nature and experience have placed in the upper one per cent of ability.

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