



NEWS RELEASE

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE
WATERLOO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
WATERLOO, ONTARIO

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CITATION FOR THE HONORARY L.L.D. CONFERRED ON HENRY ASBJORN LARSEN AT WATERLOG
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE'S FIRST CONVOCATION HELD IN WATERLOO, ONTARIO, ON MAY 20.

Explorer, navigator, sailor, and geographer, Henry Asbjorn Larsen has followed a career of adventure and duty that would supply script writers with material for a dozen T.V. series.

Born in Hvaler, Norway, Henry Larsen showed a very early interest in the Arctic exploits of his fellow countrymen, Nansen, Sverdrup and Amundsen. He eagerly studied the writings and charts of their voyages into the frozen North. At sixteen years of age he made his first step along the trail blazed by those hardy Norsemen, when he served on the deep-sea square-rigged sailing vessels that carried Norway's flag into the seaports of every nation. In 1919 and 1920 he attended and graduated from the Norwegian Nautical School in Oslo. After serving a term in the Norwegian Navy, he joined the Norway Pacific Line as deck officer. In 1923 he made his first Arctic voyage as mate and navigator on a trading vessel. In 1928 he became a naturalized Canadian and joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at Vancouver, B. C.

Upon completion of his basic training in law enforcement and survey reports, Henry Larsen was appointed skipper of the newly commissioned schooner "St. Roch". Thus began the remarkable relationship of navigator and ship, with Superintendent Larsen commanding the St. Roch on all her voyages until 1949.

In this period the schooner spent 12 winters on voyages to various points in the Western Arctic and twice navigated the Northwest Passage - first from West to East, 1940-1942, and the second time from East to West in the summer of 1944. Many brave men died in attempting to unlock the secrets of our silent Arctic wastes, but to this doughty skipper fell the honor of being the only

HENRY LSBJORN LARSEN - CONTINUED

man to ever navigate a ship through the Northwest Passage from West to East.

The long arm of coincidence has touched our Convocation today. The mace here before you, Mr. Chancellor, is the mace of the Council of the Northwest Territories. The Right Honourable Vincent Massey had this mace constructed by Eskimo craftsmen from whalebone, musk ox horns, pure gold and free copper from the mines of the Northland. The shaft is a whaler's harpoon. But it is the wooden base that is most significant. On his voyage of 1940-42, Superintendent Larsen found relics of Sir William Parry's ill-fated ship H.M.S. Fury that grounded in 1825 on Somerset Island. This piece of Oak now carved as a part of the mace was included in the collection brought back to Vancouver by the "St. Roch."

Mr. Larsen has a knowledge of Canadian Arctic waters unique in navigation annals, and his records of temperatures, ice conditions and his census of the inhabitants of one-third of our geographical area are now a part of our national heritage.

The R.C.M.P. recognized Henry Larsen's ability by promoting him to Officer Commanding "G" Division - in charge of all the Force's activities in the North. Other great honors have come his way - The Polar Medal and Bar, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and first holder of the Massey Medal, awarded by Canada's former Governor-General to the Royal Canadian Geographical Society "for outstanding personal achievement in the exploration, development or description of the geography of Canada".

When Superintendent Larsen retired last year from active service in the R.C.M.P., he was asked what was the source of greatest satisfaction in his long and dangerous career. He replied, "To be able to carry out what you set out to do."

Mr. Chancellor, I am instructed by the Senate of the University to request you to admit to the degree of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa, Henry Asbjorn Larsen.