

# THE PROFESSION OF SELF

By Magdeleine Yerlès

AN OBITUARY OF FERNAND LANDRY  
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**P**rofessor Fernand Landry died on 18 April at his home in Quebec (Canada), at the age of 69. To the very end he was a lucid, honest, loyal and generous friend of the Olympic Movement, of sport and of sport science.

Professor Landry spent his life working courageously and steadfastly toward achieving personal fulfilment, not because he rejected others, but because this was an essential requirement of the services that he had freely chosen to give. He neglected nothing, either in this “profession of self”<sup>1</sup>, or in the services he offered. Everyone, who understood the man and his quest, or the teacher in his lessons, has borne witness to this, both formally and informally.

He received two honorary doctorates from Canadian Universities, the universities of Ottawa (1990) and Moncton (1994), in recognition of his pioneering and constructive work in the vanguard of developing the science of physical activity and sport (in the broadest anthropological sense that was feature of his vision) as a university discipline, and in his role as mentor to two generations of Quebec students, both from Canada and abroad, focusing on social responsibility and involvement. Quebec’s Laval University awarded him the title of Professor Emeritus at the end of his career, in 1997.

In the sports world, the Canadian Olympic Association, of which he was a member from 1968 to 1993, elected him to the Amateur Sport Hall of Fame in Canada in 1990, and the International Olympic Committee awarded him the Olympic Order in 1997.

Fernand Landry, a specialist in the physiology of exercise (MSc, PhD from the University of Illinois, under the tutelage of T.K. Cureton) devoted his research to a study of the complex relationship

between physical activity, physical fitness and cardiovascular health, and the promotion of sport for all.

Among his many affiliations, he was president of the Canadian institute for research into physical fitness and lifestyle from 1984 to 1987, and for twenty years, from 1972 to 1992, he was vice-president for North America of the International Council of Sports Science and Physical Education, generously rendering services of an exceptional quality.

He also gave to sport and the Olympic Movement his way of working, his openness of spirit and his soul. He would often speak of the great pleasure it had given him to work in the company of three men he referred to as “the three giants of Olympic education”: Nikos Nissiotis, Otto Szymiczek and Kleantis Paleologos. For over a decade, young participants in the International Olympic Academy were introduced to his structured and structuring questioning of the very concept of Olympism and the universality of the Olympic Movement. His intellectual integrity, but also his sense of the sacred and his sensitivity, captivated audiences. Fernand Landry readily expressed his esteem for Willi Daume, Liselott Diem and Richard W. Pound, who were all closely involved in the implementation of certain of his ideals and projects.

At the end of his life, faced with the ultimate contradiction between will and powerlessness, Fernand Landry chose to face his own death with lucidity, courage, recognition, discretion and dignity.

- 1 Revel, J.-F. (1985). La profession de soi *Le Point*, 662: 72-73.
- Magdeleine Yerlès, Lecturer in the department of Physical Education of Laval University, from 1975 to 1999, worked closely with Landry at the Laval University in Quebec
- Fernand Landry was co-author (with Magdeleine Yerlès) of *The International Olympic Committee - One Hundred Years, 1894-1994 - The Idea-The Presidents-The Achievements*, Volume III, which was published in 1996, as the closing volume of the series.
- This obituary is published with permission from the author, and was earlier published in *OLYMPIC REVIEW* XXVI-27, June-July 1999, pages 84/85.