

## *Editorial*

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### **George Von Bekesy**

After auditory physiology had been almost static for about a century, it was George Von Bekesy who gave it a good push. Bekesy was born in Budapest in 1899. He earned his doctorate in physics in 1923, i.e. soon after the First World War. As a result of the War, there were very few places in Hungary which still had some scientific instruments left. One such place was the research laboratory of the Hungarian Post Office, which Bekesy joined. There he started working on problems of long distance telephone transmission. But these problems could not exhaust all of Bekesy's energy and genius. Therefore, he simultaneously started working also on physiology of the ear. During his extensive adventures, he worked with a wide range of experimental material. His preliminary experiments consisted of observing the pattern of vibration in materials like threads, chains, springs and membranes when these were touched with the stem of a vibrating tuning fork. He worked with the tiny and fragile guinea pig cochlea, as well as with the not-too-big human cochlea which he retrieved from autopsy material painstakingly collected from hospitals. Although best known for his work on the mechanics of the basilar membrane, he also investigated the endocochlear potential and cochlear microphonics. His scientific career culminated in the award of the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1961. During his Nobel Lecture he said, "Nothing has been more rewarding than to concentrate on the little discrepancies that I love to investigate and see them slowly disappear". This seminal sentence, apparently casually spoken, carries the essence of what research is all about.

IJPP is proud to remember during his birth centenary year Von Bekesy, a genius who created, even during the post-war gloomy period, opportunities for first-rate research.

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