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OBITUARY

Wolhart Niemeyer (26 July 1923 – 6 October 2010)

Wolf Niemeyer, a founder and first President of Association of Physicians in Audiology (IAPA) died in October 2010 at the age of 87 years.

Wolhart Niemeyer was born in Lüneburg, Germany in 1923. Soon after he had graduated from high school, he became a soldier in the Medical Corps, where he remained from 1940 to 1945, and was wounded three times while saving injured comrades.

Already during his medical studies in Mainz, which he financed by working as a portrait painter, coalman, and as an assistant to dog racers, he had become interested in audiology. He graduated with a thesis entitled ‘Perception of high-frequency supersonic sounds’.

At the University hospital in Marburg, he trained as a surgical ENT specialist, while conducting scientific studies in audiology. These studies were concerned with the diagnosis and pathology of auditory sentence discrimination and resulted in his dissertation. The Marburger Satztest became a key test in hearing aid fitting.

In 1970 he was nominated ‘Extraordinarius’ and became the independent head of the Audiology Department. This created a sensation in Germany, because audiology was always a subordinate section, an appendix, of the general ENT department.

Wolf Niemeyer, as he was called by his friends, became the most world-renowned German audiologist. This was not only because of his scientific research that had resulted in many publications, books and monographs, but also because of his countless lectures in Europe, USA, Mexico and Japan.

He was an active member of, and frequently chairman of, many ENT and audiological committees and wrote thousands of medico-legal reports. He received many awards, including the Bundesverdienstkreuz and the Aram Glorig reward.

To the end of his life, despite a long and severe illness, he was engaged in professional politics.

Throughout his life, Wolf Niemeyer had a major aim, that the head of an audiological department should be a medical doctor, preferably with an ENT training. His efforts have not been realized to date, and he has even been regarded as persona non grata in Germany. Because of this, Wolf Niemeyer contacted like-minded medical colleagues in other countries, and, together with Ole Bentzen, Ronald Hinchcliffe and Dai Stephens founded IAPA in 1980. He organized the first meeting of IAPA in Wiesbaden in November 1980 and was elected as the first President of the Association (1980–1985). He later became an Honorary Life Member.

Many members of the IAPA and his friends, including myself, will miss Wolf as a loving friend, and will remember his sense of humour and the social gatherings held with him. He was a highly intelligent colleague with great knowledge but also great warmth. Our thoughts and condolences go to his wife, who cared for him unselfishly in his final years.

Karin Schorn