

Obituary

George Ziedses des Plantes



George Bernard Ziedses des Plantes, Founding President of the European Society of Neuroradiology, died on July 21, 1993 at the age of 91 in Bloemendal, in the Netherlands. He died, as he had lived, in the bosom of his family. Neuroradiology, with his departure, loses the standard-bearer who had so eminently personified its traditions from their origins.

After secondary schooling in Breda, Bernard Ziedses des Plantes went on to study electrical engineering at the Institute of Technology in Delft, the very city where Roentgen had begun his career. He then studied medicine at the University of Utrecht, where he graduated in 1928. He further specialised in neurology and psychiatry in the same city. From 1940 to 1953 he was head of the neurological clinic at the Municipal Hospital in Rotterdam. In 1949 he was President of the 2nd Symposium Neuroradiologicum. Professor of Radiology at the University of Amsterdam from 1953 to 1972, he became a member of the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences in 1955.

The impressive scientific work he produced, and his unusually brilliant career, were characterised by an ingenious originality. In his legendary electromechanical workshop he experimented with radiographic apparatus of his own invention. This research led to the development of the body-section which he named planigraphy, currently known as tomography. This fundamental work had been the subject of his thesis, "Planigraphy and subtraction: roentgenographic differentiation methods" in 1934. He demonstrated from the very beginning, theoretically and experimentally, that a pluridimensional movement gives the best results in body-section radiography. The subtraction technique, developed in 1934, was not generally accepted until a monograph published in 1960 revealed its wide range of applications in angiography, little used at

the time of his first publication. Meanwhile, he had presented direct and indirect autoradiography at the 6th International Congress in Radiology in London in July 1950. This technique was what is currently known as scintigraphy or scanning, applied for the first time. As an extension of tomography, he developed seriography, a kind of continuous, stepless tomography, by combining four exposures from different directions and using partially reflecting mirrors.

Ziedses des Plantes also made a reputation for himself in neuroradiology, in pneumoencephalography, the so-called "somersault technique", in cerebral stereoangiography and through more than a hundred scientific papers. Furthermore, he developed a stereotactic device for lamina terminalis perforation in hydrocephalus, obviating the implantation of a drain, especially for tumours of the posterior fossa. Apart from all these major contributions he filled the department with numerous small inventions, improving the quality of the daily neuroradiological work. He combined scientific and professional ambition with considerable modesty. His lectures were full of understatements where his own work was concerned and interlarded with refined humour. His training with Schüller in Vienna probably gave him his old-fashioned Viennese charm, which made him loved by all.

A prize medal of the Physikalisch Medizinische Gesellschaft Würzburg in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of neuroradiology bears the name of Ziedses des Plantes.

Ziedses des Plantes was an Honorary Member of the Royal Australian College of Radiologists, Société Belge de Radiologie, Sociedade Brasileira de Neuroradiologia, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Neuroradiologie, Dutch Society of Radiology, Società Italiana di Neuroradiologia, Royal College of Radiologists, the Radiological Society of North America and was present as Honorary Member at the Silver Anniversary Meeting of the American Society of Neuroradiology in New York in 1987. He was the recipient of numerous awards: Centre Antoine Béchère medal, the Gold Medal of the XIV International Congress of Radiology, the Reinier de Graaf award, the Roentgen

plaque of the City of Remscheid-Lennep, the Schleussner Röntgenpreis, the Winkler Gold medal. The Vermeil Medal of the City of Paris was presented to him during the XVI meeting of the European Society of Neuroradiology in Paris in 1989.

A leader in his speciality, Ziedses des Plantes was nonetheless an attentive and sagacious listener for his younger colleagues and above all a generous counsellor, an enthusiast of all new technical developments. He was actively sought after as an interlocutor, his knowledge of languages permitting a vast audience. His speeches were stimulating and of high quality and he never forgot the ladies on such occasions, whom he praised with charming humour for their contribution to the success of the meetings.

After his retirement he developed a new kind of propeller motor with an energy-reducing fully feathering propeller, for which he was about to obtain a patent. He never stopped inventing!

Lastly, Ziedses des Plantes was indeed for the European Society of Neuroradiology the god-sent mentor

whose preparatory statutory contributions permitted its creation in Colmar in 1969. His prestige and honourability at the head of the Society, as its first president, marked its policies from the outset with elegance and gentleness. He will long be remembered by all those who had the privilege of knowing him personally and by those whose works, now part of their professional practice, are the fruit of his talent. He belonged to the present, spanning three generations of neuroradiologists through the technological upheavals, assisting at scientific meetings to the very year he died. All his friends and collaborators recognise in Ziedses des Plantes an extraordinary intelligence, great generosity and rigorous intellectual honesty combined with modesty and simplicity. George Ziedses des Plantes represented the tradition of Neuroradiology; he was a giant in our profession and helped to make us what we are. For that we most humbly and sincerely thank him.

J. Valk

J. P. Braun

A. Wackenheim