

In memoriam



Karl Storz **31 March 1911 – 23 May 1996**

Karl Storz was 85 years old when he died. He was born in Tuttlingen where his father founded a company for the production of medical instruments the same year as Karl Storz was born. He trained first with his father and then in Leipzig in Germany. In 1945, he left Leipzig and returned to Tuttlingen. Together with his father he founded the present Firma Karl Storz. In the beginning this company specialized in instruments for ear, nose and throat surgery. Production, however, increased after Karl Storz had constructed a binocular lens for middle ear operations. He also constructed instruments for laryngoscopy and bronchoscopy.

In 1960 he was responsible for one of the milestones in the development of endoscopy when he constructed the first cold light for endoscopy. Glass fibres had been used for the transmission of pictures by fibre optics, but it was Karl Storz who first found out that they could also be used for the transmission of light through endoscopes. All other endoscopes at this time used a glow-lamp filament at the tip of the endoscope. Karl Storz's invention very rapidly became the standard all over the world. At the same time, he also got in touch with a British physicist, H. Hopkins, who in 1959 had patented a rod-lens system for endoscopes. Hopkins had contacted several big American and European producers of endoscopes, but no one was interested in his new invention. Karl Storz was the only one who realized the tremendous revolution that the rod-lens system would mean for endoscopy. Since I am old enough to have seen the development of the rod-lens system in comparison with the glow-lamp filament endoscopes, I would like to go so far as to say that I do not think arthroscopy would have developed the way it has without the collaboration between H. Hopkins and Karl Storz. During the childhood of arthroscopy most orthopaedic surgeons were using Japanese Watanabe endoscopes with a glow lamp at the tip of the arthroscope. A not infrequent complication then was that these glow lamps broke and caused serious problems for the surgeon.

Karl Storz was interested in all types of endoscopy and has also contributed a lot to the field of urology – not just by constructing excellent endoscopes and resectoscopes, but also by developing different methods of lithotripsy. In 1970, his company also produced an ultrasound lithotripter.

He and his company have developed a fantastic series of instruments for minimally invasive surgery in all different types of endoscopy, not just arthroscopy. His company has over 400 international patents. It is no wonder that Karl Storz has been honoured in many ways in different countries, e.g. Doctor of Medicine Honoris Causa at the Medical Faculty of the University of Marburg in Germany.

I had the opportunity to meet Karl Storz several times and will never forget when a couple of years ago I went to visit his factory in order to make a video recording of him. He himself spent a whole day taking me around his factory. Although he was over 80 years old at this time, he knew every one of his old workers by their first name. Until his death he came to visit his factory every day. He was loved by all his workers. We in the field of knee

surgery and arthroscopy should be extremely grateful to Karl Storz for the contributions he and his company have made to our specialty.

When in the beginning of the 1980s I was dreaming of forming a European Society of Knee Surgery and Arthroscopy, I contacted Karl Storz and asked him if Firma Karl Storz would be willing to support a European Society for Knee Surgery and Arthroscopy (later also Sports Traumatology), Karl Storz wholeheartedly supported the idea

and has supported ESSKA ever since its birth. All of us who had the opportunity to meet Karl Storz personally, as well as all of those who have used his excellent instruments in their daily practice, will always remember the great man behind these instruments. All of us will miss him greatly.

Ejnar Eriksson
Editor-in-Chief