

Karl Storz, 1911–1996

A Remembrance

Dr. Karl Storz was born in Tuttlingen Germany the same year his father established a small medical instrument company. He learned about the business and later moved to Leipzig to work in a larger company where he worked side-by-side with doctors and learned more about surgery and operating rooms. He immersed himself in medical literature and became an expert in instrumentation and in surgical anatomy. His hobby was his work, then and throughout his life.

In 1945 he returned to Tuttlingen with his family and established his own company which specialized in ENT devices. He continued to work in close collaboration with surgeons and set a course for his small company that united medicine and technology. His goal was to make instruments which were precise, well-designed, and most important, which did not fail us and our patients.

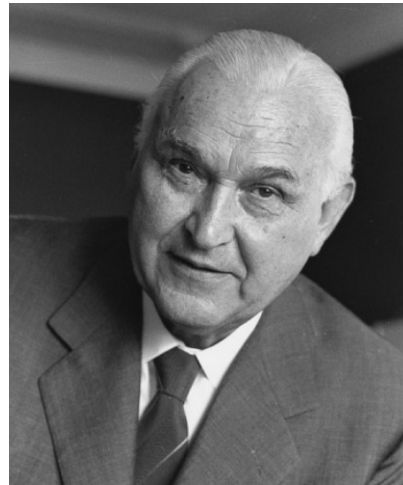
Karl Storz was a beacon lighting the way on the path to minimal access surgery and endoscopy. The need of the surgeon guided his market research, and he was always open to ideas. Even when his company became a well-known international corporation, he found time to talk on the telephone or in person to his customers and his workers. His imagination and innovation helped to revolutionize an industry, and his work made our lives as surgeons easier and the outcome more effective for our patients.

Among his achievements were:

- the binocular loop with 6×
- several generations of ENT hand instruments
- direct and indirect laryngoscopes and bronchoscopes which changed the way we can treat head and neck disease
- the first extracorporeal light source with a fiber light cable
- the video choledochoscope which facilitated exploration of the CBD
- early development of the laparoscope
- the first shock-proof ceramic arc light bulb to facilitate documentation and improve illumination
- the articulated optical arm which allowed excellent slides, prints and teaching films in the pre-video era

When Karl Storz was introduced to the Hopkins rod lens system, he understood its potential impact, embraced the idea and adapted it to medicine. With this one insight he revolutionized image and light transmission in a new optical system for rigid endoscopy.

He was the kind of businessman that is now a lost treasure. He was a man of absolute honesty, impeccable integrity, and strong character who was generous to the medical community, his town, and his friends and family. He was the first to arrive in the morning and the last one who closed



the doors in the evening. Everyone who worked with him or for him knew that the motto by which he ran his business and his life was “good is not good enough.” He sought perfection in instrument innovation and quality.

For his contributions to medicine he was awarded an honorary doctor degree in 1985 from the University of Marburg. In 1995 the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons presented him the first Pioneer in Endoscopy Award to acknowledge his contributions. In 1996 the European Association of Endoscopic Surgeons set up a memorial prize in his honor for the best scientific presentation at each annual Congress.

His humor and compassion were underlying qualities that made him endearing as well as formidable. His wife, family and many friends in the medical profession lost a great friend; but added to our personal grief is the sense that this is the end of an era. Karl Storz believed and operated under the postulate that a handshake is more valuable than a well-phrased legal document. Many of us committed to the practice and advancement of endoscopic surgery will miss him.

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