

*The 9th International Congress on Noise as a Public Health Problem
is dedicated to the memory of
the third Chair of the
International Commission on Biological Effects of Noise,
Henning E. von Gierke*



Henning Edgar von Gierke

Henning was born in Karlsruhe, Germany on 22 May, 1917 into a family whose heritage includes medical doctors, scientists, lawyers, and artists. In 1936 he was required to serve in the German Army, sent to Spain on Hitler's orders, returned an officer only to be told he could no longer serve because he had a Jewish grandmother. In the late 1930's he began studies of electrical engineering and acoustics at the Technical Universities in Karlsruhe and Munich, receiving a Diplom Ingenieur in 1943 and Doctor of Engineering in 1944 from the Technical University, Karlsruhe. There, for his thesis, he studied pure tone sound radiation from gas jets under Professor Herman Backhaus. His combined interest in human responses and their governing mechanical processes formed the basis of his four-decade professional career in studying the interaction between acoustic, mechanical energy and the human organism.

The outstanding results that he achieved in these four decades were due to a combination of several key qualities. He was a true teacher who, through his quick focused and deep probing questions stimulated his associates to think and to think logically. His scientific curiosity led to the development of several patented devices and to the answers to many scientific questions. But the quality that brought success to many of his endeavors was his remarkable ability to quickly find the central core of a complex issue and then to energetically lead others. He was brought to the US by Opera-

tion Paperclip after the war where he was launched on a research career in biophysics at Wright Field in Dayton Ohio and then from 1956-88 he was the Director of the Biodynamics and Bioengineering Division at AMRL. There, he had many accomplishments, including developing the equal energy rule as the time intensity trade-off for Air Force hearing conservation regulation. Many years later he chaired the ISO working group which prepared and obtained consensus for the adoption of ISO 1999 which used the equal energy rule as the basis for determining occupational noise exposure and estimating its hearing impairment.

Henning has been a member of the Acoustical Society of America for over 50 years, a Fellow since 1956, and its President in 1979-80. He has been a leader in the development of the Society's Standards Program, chairing the S2 Committee on Bioacoustics, and serving as the first Standards Director. For many years he organized and led the US delegation to the ISO TC/43 Technical Committee on Noise, and for 30 years he chaired the ISO TC/108 Subcommittee on Human Exposure to Mechanical Shock and Vibration. He was past Chair of the NRC Committee on Hearing, Bioacoustics and Biomechanics, past Chair of the International Commission on Biological Effects of Noise, past Chair of the ANSI Acoustical Standards Management Board, and a member of INCE and the Aerospace Medical Association.. He was a fellow and past vice president of the Aerospace and Environmental Medicine Association, an elected member of the National Academy of Engineering, the International Academy of Aviation Medicine, and the International Academy of Astronautics. He received many awards, including the Meritorious Executive Rank Award (twice), the Department of Defense Distinguished Civilian Service Award, the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of Germany, the Rayleigh Medal from the United Kingdom Institute of Physics, the Lesser Award from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and both the Silver and Gold Medals from the Acoustical Society.

He is survived by his wife Honlo and his daughter Karin. His second daughter, Susi, died of multiple sclerosis in 2002.

Kenneth M. Eldred