

OBITUARY

Dr. George Otto Gey

1899–1970

George O. Gey, one of the world's foremost pioneers in organ and cell culture, succumbed to cancer on November 8, 1970, at the age of 71. Born in Pittsburgh, he was awarded the Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1921. He served as an instructor of Zoology there until 1923, when he commenced a long, productive association with Warren and Margaret Lewis at The Johns Hopkins University. His first assignment was to direct the Tissue Culture Laboratory in the Department of Surgery. During this tenure he pursued and was awarded the Doctor of Medicine at this institution in 1933. In 1947, Dr. Gey became Director of the Finney-Howell Cancer Research Laboratory, a post which he held until his death. In 1958 he achieved the rank of Associate Professor of Surgery.

This distinguished investigator was a founder of the Tissue Culture Commission in 1947, the Tissue Culture Course in 1948, and the Tissue Culture Association in 1950. He served as the inaugural President of the Tissue Culture Association between 1950 and 1952 and as a long-standing member of the Executive Committee. He was instrumental in enlisting the patronage of Mrs. Alton Jones for establishing the W. Alton Jones Cell Science Center at Lake Placid, New York. This accomplishment stands as a lasting memorial to the vision and energies of Dr. Gey, who foresaw the combination of research, teaching, and expertise on cellular phenomena as an indispensable requirement for future progress in the health sciences.

Dr. Gey was widely sought as a lecturer and consultant. He was the recipient of many honors (including a Harvey lectureship in 1955, the Catherine Berkan Judd Award for Cancer Research in 1954, and the Wien Award for Cancer Cytology in 1956) and was a member of 17 learned societies.

In the course of 47 years he was responsible for numerous developments in organoid and cell culture techniques, in intracellular and membrane cytology, and in investigations on endocrinology, oncology, and virology with cell cultures.

Among his innovative techniques were the maintenance *in vitro* of organoid and hormonal tissues such as thyroid, parathyroid, placenta, and choriocarcinoma; the "roller tube" technique; the continuous maintenance of both normal and malignant human and rat cell lines; the flat-sided tubes and "flying coverslips" for cytological studies; the use of collagen as a crucially important substrate for fastidious cells and organoids; the growth of cells suspended in agitated fluid media; the nutrition of cells in tissue extracts and body fluids and their specific nutritional requirements; and the sterilization of biological media by fast electrons. A variety of cancer cell lines derived in his laboratory have been used internationally as tools for many studies on cell nutrition, virus infectivity, and neoplastic growth.

Dr. Gey had unusual technological skills, evidenced in mechanical and optical instrumentation applicable to the study of cells *in vitro*, and his accomplishments with time-lapse phase motion photography, supplemented with interference and electron microscopy, are well known.

Dr. Gey was a fishing enthusiast who followed the lure of lakes and streams the world over. As an epidemiologist, he participated in an adventurous investigation of the presumed viral etiology of hemorrhagic fever in Japan and Korea. He was forever ready to accept an outdoor challenge as a test to his ingenuity and endurance. The home of George and Margaret Gey was a hospitable focus for investigators of every nationality. To these and to many others with whom his activities brought him into daily contact there will always remain the warm recollections of an inspiring and humane friend.

John H. Hanks
Frederick B. Bang
*The Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland 21205*

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