Obituary
Franz Gerstenbrand
September 6, 1924 - June 30, 2017

AMN World Academy for Multidisciplinary Neurotraumatology sadly mourn the passing Franz Gerstenbrand, emeritus Professor of Neurology at Innsbruck University, Founder and Past President of the EFNS and Honorary Member of the AMN, EMN and EAN, who died last year at the age of 92.
Some personal thoughts and memories

Franz Gerstenbrand was born in Hof, a small city of Northern Moravia a historical country in the Czech Republic –where he still owned a private vineyard until he died. Having finished his school in 1942, he was immediately recruited into the German Airforce, where he served until May 1945. This WAR- experience has shaped his personality and life, whilst his medical and social-political behaviour and competence were influenced by two great personalities: Hans Hoff, Professor and director Psychiatric-Neurological University Department of Vienna, his teacher during his speciality training, and Bruno Kreisky (* 22. 01. 1911- † 29. 07. 1990, Wien). Kreisky, an Austrian politician and near friend, served as Foreign Minister (1959 to 1966 )and as Chancellor (1970 to 1983). He is considered perhaps Austria's most successful Socialist leader. So, J.W.Goethe came into my mind:” Two souls live oh in my chest”.

Traumatic Apallic Syndrome

His professorial dissertation 1967 became known as his Opus magnum out of 800 publications, 12 books.


Prof. Dr.h.c. mult Franz Gerstenbrand was, for 5 ½ decades, one of Europe’s most eminent neurologists, and a “Founding Father” of the modern field of neurorehabilitation. Very early in his career, Franz developed an interest in aspects of what we now call “neurorehabilitation”, e.g. working on disorders of motor and mental functioning. His skills in clinical observation prompted him to analyse comatose cases more deeply. Franz had a lifelong appreciation of the importance of proprioception in human performance and interest in applying neuromodulatory techniques to spinal cord injury, when he founded the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Restorative Neurology.
By application of his indefatigable enthusiasm for neuroscientific innovation, he extended this to new fields of space and under water neurology! And foot sole stimulation became his favored physical therapy to reach arousing of brain-stem, subcortical and cortical activities, which he applied for Russian Cosmonauts in space. He enjoyed being an external adviser in Moscow. He introduced this stimulation for his apallic and looked-in patients in Graz, Salzburg, followed by scientific fMRI studies until his last days. Under water neurology and ethics both were his favourite contributions at international congresses, linked to hyperbaric oxygenation after TBI. And he connected question of amelioration in non treatable diseases, with his continuous discussion of end of life with regard to AS/ VS.

Franz, a convinced European, was a dedicated supporter of AMN & EMN, and as one of the founders rather enthusiastically of his East-Europ. POLA- Symposia & EFNS / now EAN & of WFNR and his SIGs chairs. Franz Gerstenbrand was the owner of numerous national & international high and highest awards. We will miss him!