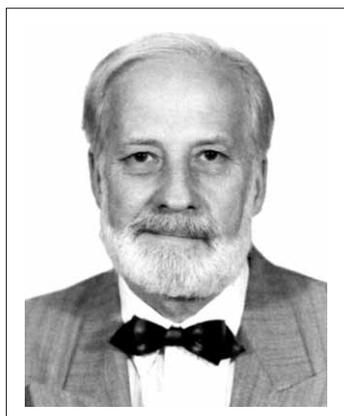


## IN MEMORIAM

### Ottó G. Eiben (1931–2004)



Professor Eiben, who was a modest, cultured and considerate scientist, passed away after a short, though severe illness, on November 16, 2004.

Ottó G. Eiben was born in Szombathely, a West-Hungarian town near the Austrian border. He studied biology and chemistry in Debrecen Kossuth Lajos University between 1949 and 1954. After having graduated at the University he worked until 1963 in the county of Vas. He was awarded the university doctor's degree in 1962. In 1963 He relocated in Budapest and he joined the Department of Physical Anthropology, Eötvös Loránd University of Science, Budapest, of which he was chair between 1975 and 1996. He got his CSc degree in 1972 and was awarded the DSc degree in 1988.

His research work focussed on two main fields: child development and maturation, secular trends, respectively the variations of human physique. His first report was published in 1951. The Körmend Study gained him international reputation: every tenth year between 1958 and 1988 he reported on the secular changes occurring in the children of this small Transdanubian town. A monograph on the summary results appeared in 1988. Unfortunately, he could not finish the analysis of his last follow-up study of 1998.

We owe him the very first national representative growth study on the basis of which he provided us with the first Hungarian growth standards (1986), these are widely used by paediatricians, physical educators, teachers of medical gymnastics and therapeutic exercises as well as coaches engaged in child sports. He was the leader and organizer of the Longitudinal Growth Project of Budapest (first summary published in 1992).

In the field of morphological variations in physique he employed a new multivariate method of analysis and introduced several techniques of methodology. This line of his research work laid the foundations for up-to-date studies of physique in Hungary.

Professor had a perspective on sport, he was an accomplished fencer and coach. He was an expert in »sport anthropometry«. In 1966, two years before the Mexico Olympic

Games Anthropological Project, Ottó and his colleagues measured on women from 13 counties in the VIIIth European Athletic Championship. They also studied the Hungarian national women's fencing team.

Professor Eiben was the most well known Hungarian anthropologist. He attended lot of forums of international science, made study-tours in a good number of countries in several continents. He gave lectures in 30 universities in 15 countries and held courses in anthropology and human biology in more than 20 countries.

Professor Eiben reciprocated by conducting a series of congresses and symposia that brought people together, created lifelong friends who learned from and inspired one another. Eiben's symposias had an ambiance and style that were unique.

His written contribution is also outstanding: 21 books and 292 papers. The almost one thousand references to these have made him the most referenced active Hungarian anthropologist.

As a Professor of Eötvös University, he has been continually active as a teacher and scholar. He was the founder, organizer and leader of postgraduate special education in anthropology and human biology. The number of doctoral dissertations submitted by Hungarian students and those from abroad in our department are evidence of his success as a leading personality of his school. He only withdrew from this work after his retirement.

As a science organizer he was an active member of several national and international societies: general secretary, then vice-president of the Hungarian Society of Biology, president of the Anthropological Commission of the Hungarian Academy of Science (1985–1999), vice-president of the European Anthropological Association except for the period when he was president (1986–1988), president of the International Association for Human Auxology (1991–1994). He organized a great number of successful international and national congresses and symposia. In the 1970s this activity was sort of opening the windows toward the progress of science in the West.

Between 1965 and 1999 he was Editor-in-Chief of the journal »Anthropologiai Közlemények«, now the single Hungarian periodical for physical anthropology. He was also the starter, editor and publisher of the monographic series *Humanbiologia Budapestinensis* and its supplements. Several international journals had him on their editorial board.

For his scientific activity he was awarded several honours both at home and abroad: the National Youth Prize (1986), the Szent-Györgyi Albert Prize (1995), the Szentágothai Prize of the Hungarian Academy of Science (1999), the Silver Eötvös József Wreath for Life-work of the Hungarian Academy of Science (2001), the Alex Hrdlička Commemorative Medal of the Czechoslovakian Society of Anthropology (1987), the Gorjanovič-Kramberger Commemorative Plaque of the Croatian Society of Anthropology (1996). The International Society of Kinanthropometry recognized his excellent activity in research and scientific organization by the Award of Merit (1998).

Professor Ottó G. Eiben's death is a great loss not only to Hungarian physical anthropology. He played a major part in my career as well as in the life of all active Hungarian anthropologists. We, all the near and far friends of his, will dearly miss him, but we will do the best we can to continue what he had begun.

*Éva B. Bodzsár*