



Fritz Verzár

Fritz Verzár, 1886–1979

The founder of our journal, Professor *Fritz Verzár*, died peacefully in his sleep in his 93rd year on March 13, 1979. With him, we lose one of the founding fathers of experimental gerontology as a branch of physiology and natural science, and one of the warmest and best-loved personalities, known and welcomed in a world-wide community of friends and colleagues.

Fritz Verzár, born in Budapest in September 1886, was a physiologist of international standing long before he became a gerontologist. It is characteristic of his vital and dynamic personality that after his retirement from the Chair of Physiology at the University of Basel, which he had held for 26 years up to the age of 70, he opened up an entirely new field of research, personally collecting the funds necessary to establish his Institute of Experimental Gerontology in Basel, which he then actively directed until he was 90.

Those of us who had the privilege of working in his Institute – as collaborators, doctoral students, or visiting scientists – will remember him as a man of unbounded vitality, who always had a bottle of whisky and a box of chocolates ready in his desk for his visitors. He overflowed with original ideas, often to the

despair of his assistants who then had to plan the appropriate experiments. He cared personally for the happiness and well-being of each one of us, whether animal keeper or professor. His unexpected and unusual gifts (he once gave me a large and handsome volume of Wilhelm Busch's works) were just as much a part of him as his occasional terrible tempers with his assistants, when he would dramatically ask whether he was the only person to do any work in the Institute. He was a true cosmopolitan, at home and at ease in all parts of the world – and the world in turn came to Basel to talk to him and to profit from his bountiful flow of ideas. The impetus he gave to gerontology raised it from the uneasy neighbourhood of 'rejuvenation' to the level of an exact experimental science.

Those of us who collaborated with *Fritz Verzár* in this last major productive period of his life met him when he was already over 70 years of age. In his life, we played only a small part for a short period of time. In our lives, the years with him are a major epoch, one which left an indelible and irreversible imprint on our way of thinking and working. We shall not forget him.

H.P. von Hahn, Basel