Otto Glasser, Ph.D.

Head of the Department of Biophysics, 1927-1960
Emeritus Consultant, 1961-1964
The Cleveland Clinic Foundation

Born September 2, 1895
Died December 11, 1964

Otto Glasser, Ph.D.

ON December 11, 1964, The Cleveland Clinic Foundation lost one of the most distinguished members of its staff, Dr. Otto Glasser, Emeritus Consultant in the Department of Biophysics. Doctor Glasser's death ended a long career in research, in teaching, and in scientific writings, which won for him the profound respect of his colleagues throughout the world, and earned for him many well-deserved honors.

He was born in Saarbrücken, Germany, September 2, 1895, and after his preliminary education and his service in the German Army during World War I, he received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Physics from the University of Freiburg in 1919. His early teaching posts included instructorships at the Radiological Institute of Freiburg, 1919 to 1921, and at the University of Frankfurt Medical School, 1921 to 1922. After his marriage to Emmy von Ehrenberg, July 19, 1922, they immigrated to the United States, where Doctor Glasser served as biophysicist at the Howard Kelly Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, from 1922 to 1923.

When the Cleveland Clinic opened on February 26, 1921, Dr. G. W. Crile, Sr., whose research interests for many years previously had emphasized the fundamental physical principles of physiology, established a Department of Biophysical Research under the leadership of Hugo Fricke, Ph.D. Two years later Doctor Glasser first became a member of this department, serving for two years. From 1925 to 1927 he was Assistant Professor of Biophysics at the New York Post-Graduate Medical School. Returning to Cleveland in 1927, he was appointed Head of the Department of Biophysics and continued to hold this post until 1961, when he became Emeritus Consultant. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1929.

His scientific contributions include more than one hundred published papers and books, and the monumental compilation of *Medical Physics*, which he edited, and which was published in three editions in 1944, in 1950, and in 1960. His final illness prevented him from taking on the task of preparing a fourth edition. His chief literary and historical hobby was the study of the life of Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, discoverer of the X-ray. Doctor Glasser's definitive life of the great scientist was first published in German in 1931 under the title, *Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen*. English translations of the book were published in London in 1933 and in the United States in 1934. In 1945, the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Röntgen's birth, Doctor Glasser published his book, *Dr. W. C. Röntgen*, a commemorative volume containing a new translation of the three classic papers on "A New Kind of Rays." This book was dedicated to the memory of the discoverer. These books and other papers regarding Röntgen are evidence that

Doctor Glasser was the world's outstanding authority on the life and accomplishments of the great physicist. He also collaborated in the preparation and editing of *Physical Foundations of Radiology*, which was published in three editions, 1944, 1952, and 1961.

Among his many scientific contributions, probably the most important work of Doctor Glasser, for which he received worldwide recognition, was his fundamental part in the invention of the condenser dosimeter for the measurement of X-rays and radiation from radioactive substances, which was developed in collaboration with Dr. U. V. Portmann and Mr. Valentine B. Seitz of the Cleveland Clinic staff. The original dosimeter is now in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. After World War II Doctor Glasser devoted much attention to the study of radioactive isotopes and their application in the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

The special honors that came to Doctor Glasser during his lifetime are:

Special Certificate of Honor for his Röntgen Exhibition at The American Medical Association meeting in Detroit, 1930.

Gold Medal Achievement Award of the Radiological Society of North America, 1936.

Olympia Decoration, 1938.

Janeway Medal of the American Radium Society, 1950.

Curatorship (Honorary) of the Röntgen Museum at Lennep, Germany, 1950.

Röntgen Plaque of the Röntgen Museum at Lennep, 1951.

John S. Coulter Plaque of the American Congress of Physical Medicine, 1953.

Commander's Cross, Order of Merit (Germany), 1960.

As a Diplomate of the American Board of Radiology, he served the Board as an Examiner in Physics for many years, and was proud of the fact that he had conducted examinations of more than two thousand candidates. A generation of Fellows in Radiology at the Cleveland Clinic received their basic training in radiation physics from him. He was called upon to calibrate X-ray equipment for many hospitals in Cleveland and other cities.

He held memberships in these scientific and medical societies:

American College of Radiology
American Physical Society
American Radium Society
American Roentgen Ray Society (Honorary)
Cleveland Academy of Medicine
Cleveland Radiological Society (Honorary)
Detroit Roentgen and Radium Society (Honorary)
Deutsche Röntgen Gesellschaft (Honorary)
Ohio Academy of Science

Radiological Society of North America

The American Association for the Advancement of Science

The American Medical Association (Vice-Chairman of Council on Medical Physics, 1956-1962)

The Society of Sigma Xi

A recitation of the accomplishments of Doctor Glasser however, fails to convey the warmth and good humor of his charming personality. Those of us who worked with him and who enjoyed his friendship will always remember his cheerful laughter and the fun that he aroused at the Clinic picnics when he led the crowd in singing. His skill as an amateur magician often added to the pleasure of nonprofessional gatherings. He will be greatly missed.

His wife, Emmy, and his daughter, Dr. Hannelore Glasser, who teaches Art History at Wells College in Aurora, New York, are assured of the sincere sympathy of all his Clinic associates.

ALEXANDER T. BUNTS, M.D.