

From Edwin B. Newman's (Harvard University) obituary "Georg von Békésy: 1899-1972" that appeared in *American journal of psychology* (1973, v. 86, no. 4, pp. 855-857).

"George von Békésy dies in Honolulu, Hawaii, June 13, 1972. A Nobel laureate, a recipient of almost every honor awarded in this country and abroad for work in hearing and otology, a connoisseur of the art of a dozen lands from Greece to Central America and the Orient, he will nevertheless be best remembered by his many friends as the almost shy, slightly stooped, bald, friendly person whose great genius was often in asking the right question at the right time.

Békésy was a member of the Harvard psychology department for almost 20 years and went to Hawaii as a result of efforts of the psychologists there.

Békésy's move to Honolulu put together several threads in his varied career. It was a psychologist, Leonard Diamond, who proposed it. It was Tommy Hamilton, the ebullient president of the University of Hawaii, who had found the means to construct a laboratory. There was at hand a range of marine material that challenged Békésy's curiosity. There was contact with the art of Japan and the Far East, and with anthropological material from the South Pacific that opened new vistas and brought new friends. In six short years he impressed both his genius and his humanity on that unique community.

It is difficult to comment adequately on the work of a man of Békésy's stature – work that without question will be legendary a generation from now. This is doubly so because Békésy worked essentially alone, at hours of his own choosing, and more particularly on problems of his own invention. Those of us around him knew only intuitively what were the issues on the cutting edge of his mind. We would discuss all sorts of technical and ancillary issues; we were rarely informed what hunches lay behind the practical problem. At the same time, to know Békésy was a rich and rewarding experience. The conversations were casual, with graduate students and staff alike. They occurred in the machine shop or late in the evening in the laboratory or office, Békésy dressed in his laboratory coat and starting off with an oblique question. All psychology stands in debt to this great and gentle man; those of us who knew him were doubly blessed."