UNESCO Kalinga Prize Winner - 1954

Kaempffert, Dr. Waldemar (Bernhard)

[Born : 27th September, 1877 - Death 1956]

It so happens that the United States and Great Britain have taken the lead in broadcasting. If that lead is maintained it follows that English must become the dominant tongue. Compared with our efforts at mass entertainment and mass education, European competition is pathetic. All ears may eventually be cocked to hear what the United States and Great Britain have to say. Europe will find it desirable, even necessary, to learn English.

1924- Waldemar Kaempffert, "The Social Destiny of Radio"

KAEMPFFERT, Dr. WALDEMAR (BERNHARD) : A LIFE WELL LIVED

American Science Editor; born Sept, 23, 1877, New York City; son of Bernhard and Juliette Kaempffert; educated at College of City of New York; B.Sc.; Clarkson Inst. of Technology, D.Sc.; New York Univ., LL.B. 1903; married Carolyn Lydia Yeaton, Jan. 7, 1911 (dec. 1933). Admitted to New York Bar, 1903, registering as a Patent Attorney. Asst. Editor, Scientific American, 1897-1911; Managing Editor, 1911-15; edited Popular Science Monthly, 1915-20; Science Editor New York Times since 1927 (with exception of 1928-31, active as Director, Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago) Member; Historical Scientific Soc.; Natl. Assn. of Science Writers (Pres. 1937); Amer. Assn. for Advancement of Science. Author; The New Art of Flying, 1911; The ABC of Radio, 1922; Invention and Society 1930; Science Today and Tomorrow 1939 and 1945; Changing Views of Evolution (Current History); Science, Technology and War (Yale Review); Why Can't We Live Forever ? Rocket Ships and a Visit to Mars. Editor; Coller's Wonder Book, 1920; A Popular History of American Invention, 1924.

BIOGRAPHY

Waldemar Kaempffert

(September 27, 1877-1956)

Most Famous US Science Writer and Museum Director.

Waldemer (Bernhard) Kaempffert was born and raised in New York City. He received his B.S. from the City College of New York in 1897. Thereafter he was employed by *Scientific American,* first as a translator (1897-1900) then as managing editor (1900-1916). In 1916, he started working as the editor of *Popular Science Monthly.* In 1922, he left to become the Editor of Science and Engineering at the *New York Times.*

In 1928, following a nationwide search for a director, the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago asked Kaempffert to become its first director. He enthusiastically devoted himself to the work of laying out the history of the sciences and of the industries. He encourage his curators and exhibit designers to base their exhibits on careful research in order to be as objectively true as possible. This devotion to objectivity, however, led to disputes with the board of directors, especially around the appointment of George Ranney who was also a director of International Harvester. This appointment created a conflict of interest in the museum, as International Harvester was contributing to an exhibit on farm tractors which claimed that an IH predecessor company was responsible of the invention of the tractor. Research by both Kaempffert and his staff showed otherwise, but he could not antagonize donors to the museum nor his board of directors with the "truth." He therefore compromised his objectivity.

The board also found issue with Kaempffert's cost accounting. The board, all business executives, kept careful track of every dollar spent. Kaempffert however was more lax in his accounting. No wrongdoing was alleged, but the board wanted greater oversight. To achieve that, the board created a new layer of management, "assistant directors," who reported not only to Kaempffert but also directly to the Board. It was the usurpation of Kaempffert's authority that led him to ask, in January of 1931, the *New York Times* if he could have his old job back and, by a coincidence, the *Times* agreed. He remained with the *Times* until his retirement in 1956. He was succeeded as science editor by William L. Laurence.

Kaempffert was a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, History of Science Society, National Association of Science Writers (serving as the president in 1937), and the Newcomen Society.

Awards :

The New York Times received the Laskar Foundation Awards for the Excellence of its daily medical reporting, with a citation to Waldemar Kaempffert for his authoritative weekly columms, "Science in Review". Waldemer Kaempffert became Science Editor of the New York Times in the year 1927. On June 7, 1931-Waldemar Kaempffert, an Engineer, who had been writing on Science Topics for The Times beginning 1927, introduces a regular science column in the sunday edition.

Reference :

- Jaques Cattel, ed., *American Men of Science : A Biographical Directory,* 9th ed., vol.1 Physical Sciences (Lancaster, PA : The Science Press, 1955), s.v. "Kaempffert, Waldemar Bernhard."
- For information on Kaempffert's tenure with the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago see Jay Pridmore, *Inventive Genius : The History of the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago* (Chicago : Museum of Science and Industry, 1996), pp.26-48

Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago)

The Museum of Science and Industry is located in Chicago, Illinois in Jackson Park, in the Hyde Park neighborhood. It is housed in the only in-place surviving building from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the former Fine Arts Building.

The building, which was intended to be a more permanent structure than the other Exposition buildings, initially housed the Field Museum of Natural History. When a new Field Museum building opened closer to the downtown in 1921, the former site was left vacant. After a few years, the building was selected as the site for a new science museum. The building's exterior was re-cast in stone, retaining its 1893 Beaux Arts look, while the interior was completely rebuilt in Art Deco style.

The museum was establised in 1926 by wealthy Sears, Roebuck & Company chairman Julius Rosenwald, who pledged $3 million to the institution. He eventually donated over $5 million. He also insisted that his name not appear on the building, but nonetheless, for the first years of museum's existence, it was known as the Rosenwald Industrial Museum. Rosenwalds' vision was to create an interactive museum in the style of the Deutsches Museum.

The museum conducted a natonwide search to find its first director. In the end the board of directors selected Waldemar Kaempffert because he shared Julius Rosenwald's vision. Kaempffert was the science editor for the New York Times. He assembled the museum's first staff and began organizing and constructing the exhibits. He was also instrumental in developing close ties with the science departments of the University of Chicago which supplied much of the scholarship for the exhibits. Kaempffert resigned in early 1931 amid growing disputes between himself and the board of directors over the objectivity and neutrality of the exhibits and his management of the staff.

The new Musuem of Science and Industry was first opened to the public in 1933 during the Century of Progress Exposition.

In keeping with Resonwald's vision, many of the exhibits are interactive, ranging from the Hall of Communications which explains telephony, to the coal mine, which re-creates a mine inside the museum. The museum houses the U-505, the only German submarine captured by the US in World War II, silent film actress Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle and the Transportation Zone which includes exhibits on air and land transportation. The first diesel-powered streamlined stainless-steel trainset, *Pioneer Zephyr,* is on permanent display.

The Henry Crown Space Center at the Museum of Science and Industry includes the Apollo 8 capsule which took Frank Borman, James Lovell and William Anders on the first lunar orbital mission. Other exhibits include an OmniMax theater, Scott Carpenter's Mecrucy Atlas 7 capsule, a Lunar Module trainer and a life-size mockup of a space shuttle.

In addition to its three floors of standing exhibits, the Museum of Science and Industry also hosts temporary and travelling exhibits. In 2000, it created and hosted the largest display of relics from the wreck of *Titanic.* It also hosted Gunther von Hagens' Body Worlds exhibit, a view into the human body through use of plastinated human specimens.

The museum is known for unique and quirky permanent exhibits, such as a walk-through model of the human heart. Due to its age and design, the "Sci and I" building itself become a museum piece.