

Edgar Stene – His life and work



Edgar W. Stene was born on 19 November 1919 in Sarpsborg, Norway. After attending secondary school and evening classes at a technical college he became a sailor and in 1941 trained as a mechanic in Shanghai. He was a petty officer in the Navy from 1938 to 1940 and from 1940 to 1941 he was a police sergeant in the international sector of Shanghai. Afterward he went back to sea as a mechanic, serving for the English and Norwegians. He started suffering from rheumatism during the war but he nevertheless continued in this profession, although serving at sea at that time was a tremendous strain. For almost three years he was 2nd mechanic on a ship serving in the allied forces and which took part in the invasions of Italy and Burma. In addition the ship was specially commissioned for work involving the building of airfields in Indonesia. Already at that time Stene was showing severe symptoms of rheumatic disease and his doctor recommended hospitalization. Owing to the importance of his work on board ship, he carried on without considering his state of health. He remained

on board until his health could no longer stand up to it, with the result that he ended up with rheumatoid spondylitis (morbus Bechterew).

Despite his poor state of health, with continual arrest of movement, he proceeded to engage himself with welfare work. He was a founding member of “Norsk Revmatiker Forbund”, and was its Secretary-General from the first day of its existence until his death on 15 October 1969.

Stene performed the work of a pioneer, which has benefited thousands of rheumatism sufferers. He was a member of numerous committees and furthermore played an important role in Scandinavian and international organizations.

He was elected committee member of the International Society for Rehabilitation of the Disabled in 1969.

In 1964 Stene was honored with the highest decoration of the Swedish National Federation against Rheumatism and in 1966 he received a distinguished service gold medal from His Majesty the King, for his outstanding work in the struggle against rheumatism. Years previous to that he accepted the highest honor of the Norwegian Women’s Medical Association for his extensive work.

It was with unbelievable energy and strengths of purpose that he built up the “Norsk Revmatiker Forbund” to be one of the biggest organizations for health and welfare in the country. His constant aim was to show disabled persons the way from apathetic inactivity to a positive and active existence. He continually emphasized the necessity of training oneself both psychologically and physically.

Edgar W. Stene recognized the need to unite rheumatic patients in a special organization in order that all matters concerning them could be dealt with in the most effective way possible.