Short Biography

**George (Jerzy) Olszewski**

by J.A. Büttner-Ennever

George (Jerzy) Olszewski (1913–1964) trained as a neurologist in Vilnius, at that time Poland, and in spite of World War II obtained an invitation to work with the internationally acclaimed brain research experts Oskar and Cécile Vogt, in the Black Forest, Germany. The Vogts’ research focused on the new idea that *cytoarchitectural differences in the brain may reflect functional differences*. This project had already proved successful through the mapping of the cerebral cortex by their student Korbinian Brodmann. They now encouraged Olszewski to subdivide the reticular formation of the brainstem on cytoarchitectural grounds. Olszewski’s aptitude for microscopy and neuroanatomy was clearly evident, but in the face of the drastic post-war conditions in Germany he reluctantly sought a post in Canada and with the help of Wilder Penfield miraculously obtained a job at the Montreal Neurological Institute, and later in the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery at McGill University. To complete his original neuroanatomical research project, Olszewski realized he must define many unmapped regions of the brainstem, and not only the subdivisions of the reticular formation. With the help of Donald Baxter, a young postgraduate at the Institute, the classical Atlas *Cytoarchitecture of the Human Brainstem* was prepared and published. It became the most definitive and widely used atlas of the human brainstem. In 1956 Olszewski established the Department of Neuropathology at the newly created medical school of the University of Saskatchewan, and soon after accepted the chair of Neuropathology at Toronto University. He was a well-loved colleague and teacher, and became widely known to neurologists through his description of progressive supranuclear palsy (the Steele-Richardson-Olszewski syndrome). He died unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of 50.