

## **Sven Gard, a short biosketch**

Sven Gard was born in 1905 and grew up in Södermalm, Stockholm. He had a social commitment through his life stimulated by his father, who was a lawyer (and who had contributed to the establishment of one of the first bachelor hotels in the city) and through his mother as a teacher.

Gard early showed a clear talent for mathematics and natural science during his college at Södra Latin. He chose to study medicine and had a medical candidate degree in 1929 and a medical licentiate degree in 1934 at Karolinska Institutet (KI).

He early came in contact with microbiology, especially virology since the polio epidemics emerged as an ever-increasing threat in the 20th century. One of Gard's teachers was the original Carl Kling, professor and director at the State Bacteriological Laboratory (SBL). He currently had the heterodox idea that poliovirus could spread with water and Gard studied whether there was any intermediary for the contaminant in this element.

Gard received a Rockefeller scholarship in 1939 and then worked in New York with Max Theiler, the creator of the living yellow fever vaccine, which rendered him a Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1951. Theiler, however, found that their common studies of mouse polio were more interesting than his yellow fever work. Gard continued studies of mouse polio on returning to Sweden and then joined Arne Tiselius in Uppsala.

Strong support for the research was obtained from Gustaf V's 80th Foundation, established in 1939. It contributed a well-founded basic grant, paid for an electron microscope delivered from Siemens, Berlin, 1943 and also for printing Gard's thesis submitted the same year.

Gard became an Assistant Professor at SBL 1943-45 and then Professor of Bacteriology at KI. In 1948, the parliament established a personal professorship of viral research for Gard, which he held until 1972.

He made decisive action for the development of the Swedish extinct of polio vaccine, whose inactivation conditions were safer than those used by Jonas Salk. With this vaccine, the disease was eradicated from our country. Some live Sabin-type vaccine never needed to be used.

Sven Gard had a sharp intellect and an unusual overview of the medical sciences and especially microbiology. Through that he came to play a major role in the Nobel Prize work at KI for almost all his time as a professor. He was the introductory speaker at the Nobel prize ceremonies no less than five times, which is unique among teachers at KI.

Gard didn't have any own children. All the assets he and his wife collected and which he left behind at his death in 1998, was donated to the Karolinska Institutet's Virus Research Fund. With great success he handled the management of the assets, as long as he lived.

*Text written by Erling Norrby. Submitted to Grant's Office at Karolinska Institutet 2018-11-20, upon request, since Erling knew Sven Gard well, worked with him and also has written about him in his books.*