

**Peter Somogyi after dinner speech, Kuffler Centenary Symposium,  
New York 31<sup>st</sup> Oct. 2013**

I never met Stephen Kuffler; I missed my chance when in 1980 he attended the International Physiology Congress in Budapest, and also visited János Szentágothai, my mentor. I realised only much later what I had missed. Then I was too much of a “young man in a hurry”, glued to the lab and only attending few lectures. Now I know that there are opportunities in life, which are granted only once.

Recently, I realised how much our lives had in common. We were both born in Hungary, we both supported our university studies through work, and we both spent productive years in Australia as young scientists. The similarities stop there: he became a world changing scientific giant and I became an electron microscopist. Kuffler had to escape Central Europe as the tragedy of Nazi dictatorship was unfolding before the second World War. However, I could leave dictatorship legally simply taking a job in Australia, then I had a chance to move to England, as did Kuffler when he left Hungary. As we heard today, Steve enriched the scientific life of this country and indeed of the whole world. His example shows that the flourishing of science and talents requires transparent institutions and mechanisms, equal opportunities for all and the rewarding of talent, which is still evolving in Central Europe.

This is why, when last year I decided to set up a Foundation in Hungary to identify, nurture and reward young talented scientists and was discussing the idea with my good friend Jozsef Somogyi (no relation), we needed a name for the Foundation and decided to name it the Stephen W. Kuffler Research Foundation. It is a completely independent, registered charity run by volunteers, and funded by private individuals. The applications from students are rolling in as I speak for the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nov deadline for our first Scholarship Programme. As we have heard today, Kuffler’s life and achievements provide a shining example and aspiration much needed in the region now and for future generations. This opportunity came when a year ago I received the Semmelweis-Budapest Award, and I felt that at the time of extreme austerity and reduction in government support for education, I could not accept the 10 thousand EUR prize for my own purposes. I first contacted Torsten Wiesel about the Foundation and he was enthusiastic and joined me as a Founding Member, as did several of you in this room to whom I am most grateful for your trust and support.

Fifty years ago, in this great country, another exceptional individual said “I have dream... “ ... he acted upon his dream and changed the world.

I also dream about a world, where creative individuals can realise the potential they have within them, and can maximise their contributions to their own communities. Exceptional individuals, like Stephen Kuffler, should have an opportunity to leave, and study elsewhere, but they should not have to leave their communities.

You know that this is not a perfect world, even if it is better now than when Kuffler left Europe. Many of you here have done a lot and continue to do more for a world where opportunities are better for all. This is what we try to do with the Foundation in our small way.

“You may say I am dreamer,  
but not the only one  
I hope some day you join us,  
and the world will be as one”

John Lennon

Please support the Stephen W Kuffler Research Foundation generously, see [www.kuffler.org](http://www.kuffler.org) .