INTRODUCTION

The anatomical tubal connection between the nasal part of the pharynx (nasopharynx) and the middle ear was recognised as 580 B.C. by Alcmeon of Sparta (Stavenson et al., 1949).

In 1563, the auditory tube was described in details by Italian anatomist, Bartolomeus Eustachius who said "The knowledge of this passage could be of great use to doctors for the proper use of medecines". However, the important role which the tube plays in maintaining the normal function of the middle ear has only been emphasized as recently as the last four decades.

Variations in the barometric environment experienced by aviators and marine divers in the early 1940's lead to the recognition of otitic barotrauma (McGibbon, 1942; Shchilling et al., 1942), and drew attention to the complications of disorders of auditory tube function.

The introduction of microscopic middle ear surgery in the early 1950's also increased the demands for accurate and detailed knowledge of auditory tubal function under normal and pathological conditions.

It is now generally accepted that an adequately functioning auditory tube is one of the vital factors for the maintenance of a normal middle-ear cleft.