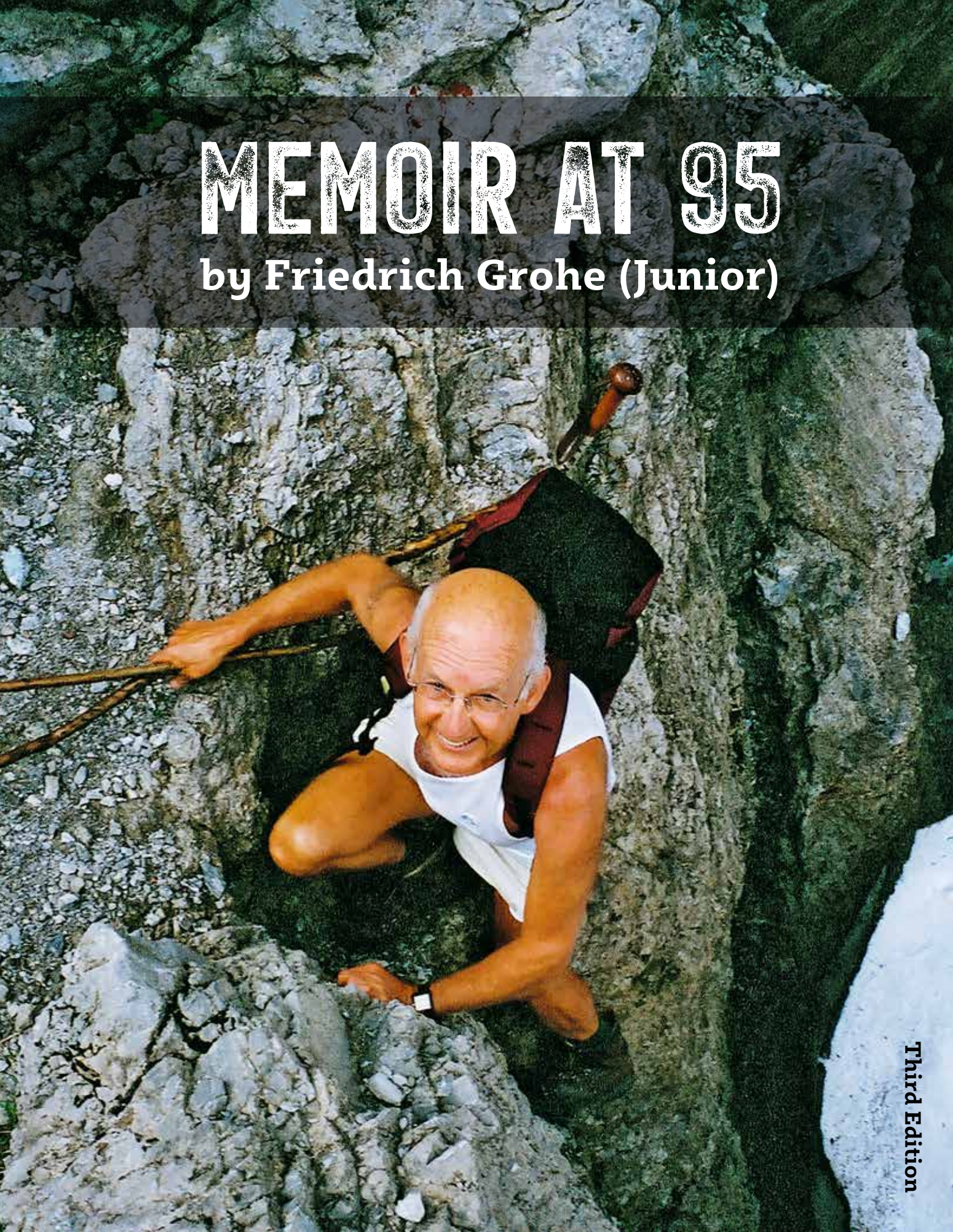
MEMOIR AT 95

by Friedrich Grohe (Junior)



Third Edition

View of the Schijenfluh Massif from far down the valley below Berghaus Alpenrösli, on my way up on skis to the Sulzhütte from St Antönien

Cover Photo: Climbing up from Quocair on Videmanette in Rougemont (with Michael Krohnen, who took the photo), early 1990s

MEMOIR AT 95

by Friedrich Grohe (Junior)

For Christoph and John

Hallo Pépé! I wanted to write to you to say I have read the memoire and loved it! What a great opportunity to hear your story directly from you, as well as with the company. I learned a few things and got emotional at others. Truly a great read I have already shared with friends, and will keep as a treasured memory. Thank you. See you soon!

Love and hugs – David
[my grandson]

CONTENTS

THE GROHE FAMILY

The Grohes

I was born Hans Arthur Friedrich in 1929 to Ruth (née Reymond, 1910–1993) and Karl Otto Friedrich Grohe, known as Friedrich (eventually Friedrich Senior, 1904–1983), in Schiltach in the Black Forest of Germany. I'm known as Friedrich, or Fridolin or Mali in the family – and especially during my time in the Grohe company, as 'the Junior'.

Schiltach is a small, originally medieval town of timber-framed houses on the Kinzig River. In older days, Black Forest timber was formed into rafts and floated down the Kinzig to the Rhine and all the way to the Netherlands. Some of our ancestors had been *Flösser* (navigators and captains on the rafts), and I was always impressed by stories of these watermen.

My father's father, Otto Johannes, known as Hans (eventually Hans Senior, 1871–1955), was a master weaver. After his wife died, he moved with their three children – Helene (Lenchen), Liesel (Lieschen) and Johann (Hans Junior, 1895–1960) – from Luckenwalde near Berlin to Schiltach, where he took a job in a textile factory. One year later, in 1900, he set up his own small business making alarm clock casings for the well-known company Junghans. The following year, his workshop burned down. He began again, and with the help of two others founded a much more diversified metal works. He designed, manufactured, packed, and kept the accounts for metal lighting, cooking, fireplace and sanitation goods – then, by bicycle, delivered the products himself throughout the nearby valleys. The business flourished. In 1904 he married a local woman, Magdalene Schöttle, and soon she gave birth to my father. The following year the company began making overhead showers, still one of Hansgrohe's central products, known worldwide. The book *Der Clevere Hans (The True Fairy Tale of Clever Hans)* is about Hans Senior's – or rather Hansgrohe's – journey. It can be found online.

Hans Senior could be generous and helpful, and his relationship with me was always very friendly. But he could be violent with his children. One of his daughters told me that each time Hans Senior returned from a business trip he would beat his children with sticks until the sticks broke. Once he even used a section of hosepipe from the garden. My father, too, reported such stories, without appearing to be traumatized by what had happened. My uncle Klaus (born in 1937 to Hans Senior's third wife) told me that Hans Senior would close the door and chase him around the room shouting, "He who loves his children, beats them!" What more obviously marked my father psychologically was something that happened to him in adulthood: in 1934 Hans Senior fired him from the Hansgrohe company, and for the rest of his days my father remained homesick for his old life.

My Childhood in Schiltach

Thankfully my early years were mostly free of such violence. My friends and I, along with various dogs, would spend as much time as possible playing in nature. Later, in Hemer, we had a German shepherd named Arno. He was rather wild so was kept within a big fenced-in area. Our chickens and ducks would stroll right past him, unimpressed by his barking. He did get out sometimes, though, and once killed several ducks. He didn't eat them, just lined them up in a kind of display. He preferred eating wild rabbits. Much later I became fond of cats but worried about them catching birds.

Behind our house lay a big garden through which a channel of the Kinzig River ran. The

The Kinzig in Schiltach

Our house on the Aue in Schiltach, connected to the factory; where Hans Senior lived and died, and where I spent my first 5 years. Pictured: Uncle Johnny, Grandmother Marguerite, my mother, Ruth, and a young Uncle Paul Ernest with his back to the camera

Our father, Friedrich Senior (forced to join the Nazi Party and to wear some kind of badge), me, our mother holding Bernd, and Yvonne, 1939 or 1940

house itself bordered the HANSGROHE factory on Aue Strasse. And at the end of this road stood my grandparents' house, made of wood. Grandmother Magdalene kept a large garden with numerous raspberries, and there were big cactus-like agaves in front of the house which, when winter came, she would bring inside to the winter garden. That was also where she kept the *Berliner Illustrierte*, my favourite magazine. She had a radio, which fascinated me, and I would drive her crazy changing the stations. Kasperle, the name of a puppet, was my favourite programme. Hans Senior liked to sniff tobacco and eat a hard-boiled egg every morning with chives.

We had a small wagon. One day, when I was quite young, I loaded it with food and water. I was always thirsty and my father liked to joke that it was good I didn't drink alcohol. (He himself drank a bottle of white wine every evening.) As I pulled the wagon along Aue Strasse, which at that time was a golden sand road, someone asked me where I was going. "Far away," I replied, though the trip ended at my grandparents' house. Later, when I was 5, I was happy when my parents gave me a bicycle. I enjoyed riding it on the Aue but magically would be drawn to people walking towards me. When I rode into them, they would catch me so I wouldn't fall. I also had a *Trampelauto*, a toy car that a small child can sit in and pedal around. Mr Mutschler, the head of maintenance for the factory, kindly put some lights on it for me. Then I insisted it needed a motor, which he regretted he couldn't do.

In short, the first years of my life were happy and playful, even though they included a few perils. One such befell me as a toddler when I grabbed at a pan on the stove, which caused boiling milk to run over parts of my face and chest. Immediately my parents treated my face with what was used at the time: oil and flour. But when they removed my shirt, some layers of skin under my left arm went with it. It was only many decades later that treatment could mostly eliminate the scars.

Another day my father and I were enjoying moving tadpoles from our pond to the Kinzig channel, which had a flow strong enough to run the village mill. Soon I desperately wanted to keep them, and jumped in. I tried to shout but couldn't and got dragged under a little bridge. My father rushed to the other side of the bridge and rescued me, which was lucky because children had been known to drown there. Of course, I thought I'd been rescued by one of the mystical watermen.

The third peril was when my father gave me 2 marks to pay a debt to the grocer for bananas. I walked to the shop and handed over the money … and received 1 mark in return. Well! Of course I used the remaining mark to buy sweets – lots of sweets. The shopkeeper was hesitant to give me so many, but eventually she did. Then I was nervous about returning home with so much. I tried to get help from Aunt Lieschen, who was always nice to me (she thought I was a genius), but she wasn't home. So, I distributed as much as I could among my young neighbour friends. Then I went home. Dear reader, I should have brought the mark instead. Harking back to his own childhood, my father beat me with a stick – miserably! News that I'd been distributing chocolates and bonbons must have reached my parents before I arrived, because not much explanation from me was needed about what had happened to the rest of the banana money. The beating came immediately. Later I found Aunt Lieschen at home and asked her to shut all the doors and windows. Then I exclaimed, "*Herrgott Sakrament! Herrgott Sakrament!*" (in Schiltach: "Goddammit! Goddammit!"). Aunt Lieschen gave me coffee with lots of sugar and *Schlagsahne*. For my sins, I became addicted not to the coffee and not to the sugar but to the whipped cream. Thereafter, I called this the *Bananen Prugel* (banana beating). What an 'education' this was.

It reminds me of a Christmas when I was very young. 'St Nicholas' would visit people's houses with a big bag on his back, but it didn't hold gifts for the children. It was the way he would take the children away if they hadn't been good. When he came to our place, I was so frightened that I prayed to him on my knees, begging him not to

Grandmother Magdalene Grohe in front of the Holzhaus *(wooden house) on the Aue in Schiltach*

1931

Holding a small bird in Schiltach, 1932 or '33; as most children, I was always fond of animals

take me. My parents didn't help me. I don't know what other parents did. Of course, as children do, I moved on.

One day we were standing by the side of the road as an automobile rally came through our village. There were big, mostly-open cars carrying a passenger in addition to the driver. At some point, as one of the cars was passing by us, we could see that its passenger had climbed onto the top of the car and was opening the petrol tank cover to see how much fuel was left! This impressed me very much.

Another time we went to a circus, where I became fascinated by the monkeys. A little later we went to watch an automobile race in the mountains of Schauinsland, and the drivers there were dressed head to toe in leather. You can imagine? When there was a lag between passing cars, I asked my parents quite loudly, "When is the next monkey coming?"

There seemed to be a lot of racing. One day Hans Junior took part in a motorcycle competition. He won his race even though he had to push his motorcycle over the finish line. He was the only one in his entry category! Even so, the prize was a big pendulum clock that announced the time just as church bells do. He kept it for many years in his house in Alpirsbach.

Our lives continued in Schiltach until I was almost 6, when Hans Senior removed my father from Hansgrohe. Hans Junior was made junior limited partner (joined in this a few years later by his sisters, Lenchen and Lieschen) and he took over the management of the Schiltach factories. I was told much later that my father had been fired because he took the side of his mother in his parents' divorce. Hans Junior believed my father did this because of the money. "What a father you have!" he told me. I hadn't yet had major problems with my father, and he was quite charming much of the time, so I didn't understand what Hans Junior meant.

Now that I think about it, I recall two strange events. When I was around 4 or 5, my father took me to a privately-owned forest to steal a silver fir tree for Christmas. Another time he took me to a nearby Schiltach garden to steal pumpkins for Halloween. I remember a lady running and shouting and I felt very unsettled. I still don't understand why we had to steal.

But there were also more normal and even somewhat heroic adventures. Another day when I was about 4 or 5, on a walk with my father, we passed a farm where there was an aggressive little dog. Barking wildly, it immediately ran toward us. I was frightened and my father pulled me close, holding his walking stick in front of us, plus the raincoat he'd been carrying. As the dog moved around to approach from different angles, my father turned us to keep up with the dog. It was as though we were on a carousel, and the raincoat streamed in the air creating a barrier. I hid behind the coat but could see the dog biting it. This went on for a couple of minutes until the farmer arrived to calm the dog.

When I was around 8, I had a *Tretroller*, a child's push-scooter. One day, I got it in my head to push-ride it the 7.5 km from Iserlohn to Hemer. I wanted to visit my father in the factory. He was surprised to see me but didn't scold. I was allowed a lot of freedom at that time. There was also little traffic in those years. Most people walked, took a tram, or rode a bicycle as my father often did to work.

Much later, when a few of my high school teachers in Hemer happened to have opportunities to speak with my father, they told me afterwards that they were impressed by his energy and confidence. He did have lots of energy, and he could respond quickly in challenging situations. But there was also a growing tendency to become furious and put people down.

Back to the divorce story, which goes something like this: Grandmother Magdalene's mother had worked for some years in a Swiss household. Remarkably, she had been paid in gold coins. When she married my great-grandfather Schöttle, a shoemaker, he became known for proudly walking through the village – to the pub – jingling his pocket of coins. (As a child I visited his workshop, now a museum, and was impressed

Hans Senior with his daughter Lieschen, on Feldberg

by the loud hammering, the smell of the leather, plus all the Schnapps being drunk.) Magdalene inherited the gold coins, and after her 1904 wedding to Hans Senior, she helped to finance the expansion of Hansgrohe. This, together with the company's innovative approach and meticulous work ethic, meant that by 1913 the company had 22 workers plus office staff and was one of the top producers in the world of sanitation equipment. But 1914 was the start of the First World War. More than half the company's workers were called to the front; the next year, Hans Senior and Hans Junior were made to serve.

Nevertheless, within three years of the end of that devastating war, the company had so many export orders that it could set up a new brass foundry in nearby Alpirsbach, eventually to be run by Hans Junior. Hansgrohe added even more factories in the 1920s. By 1929 Friedrich (Senior), my 25-year-old soon-to-be father, was working hard in the business. He even introduced new brass die casting processes.

But when Hans Senior divorced Magdalene in 1934 and had to return her investment – a repayment my father supported – Hans Senior fired my father from the company. Hans Senior himself was almost financially ruined, but as usual he would, eventually, come out stronger than ever.

After this, my grandmother lived alone in the *Holzhaus* at the end of the road and was very sad to have lost her Hans. She would cry whenever his name was mentioned. Perhaps she could no longer hear one of the songs he liked to play on the gramophone: *Es war einmal ein treuer Husar* (Once Upon a Time There Was a Faithful Hussar). The lyrics are very nice: "He loved his girl for a year, a whole year and much more, and the love never ended."

My father with his mother, Magdalene, probably 1930s

From Schiltach to Iserlohn

My grandmother transferred the returned Hansgrohe investment to my father, and he moved the family to Iserlohn, near Dortmund, 500 km north of Schiltach. For four years we lived there, at 13 Süd Strasse. I started school. My mother had grown up in La Vallée de Joux in Switzerland, so she was originally French-speaking. This meant that when she helped me with my German lessons there would be mistakes, frequently pointed out by my teacher. My mother thought the teacher was silly and, from then on, I found it difficult to fully trust her.

Our class, having more than 30 students, was crowded. Whenever possible, some friends and I would take advantage of the chaos and skip class, usually ending up strolling through the nearby forest. One day we found a dead dear and carried it – each of us supporting one of the legs – all the way to the forest ranger, which was quite a distance. The lady there gave us some nice biscuits for our effort.

In 1936 my father used 30,000 marks of the returned investment to buy the company in nearby Hemer where he was working: Berkenhoff & Paschedag, which produced faucets. This was a good opportunity for him to become independent. Financially tough, he bought the company from the widow of the former owner and contracted to pay her for it in monthly instalments – an arrangement that benefited him more than her. He also began paying his mother a monthly 'pension' of 800 marks, which she complained was too little. Soon afterwards, he started the process of having a house built in Hemer, on the hill called Bemberg. Many years later, when the family was in South Africa, at my father's request I supervised the construction of an indoor swimming pool there.

My father had two large Berkenhoff & Paschedag chimneys torn down, remnants of an even earlier company: Basse und Selve, which produced brass bars. I was probably 8 when I helped one of the construction workers to knock old mortar off the bricks.

And once again my parents took me to impressive sporting events. There was a six-day bicycle race in Dortmund. A horse race where I was allowed to place a bet, and correctly guessed the winner. And a boxing match whose flyweight fighters I can still remember, as I would have been in that category.

THE WAR YEARS

From Iserlohn to Hemer

In Iserlohn, we had very kind Jewish neighbours. But Hitler and the Nazi Party were already in power, and two years later, in early November 1938, Nazi paramilitary forces and civilians looted, smashed and burned Jewish-owned homes, synagogues and other buildings (in what came to be known as *Kristallnacht*). I saw a friend of mine throwing a Jewish child's scooter over a fence. I didn't understand.

Before war was declared, our family moved into the new house in Hemer, at Am Bemberg 15. It had a good view of the town, and at 9 years old I was impressed with its two bathrooms, each with a bathtub and shower; one of the bathtubs was blue, and there were colourful washbasins.

At the start of the war, in 1939, I entertained thoughts of throwing myself over baby Bernd, my brother born just that year, if ever I heard signs of an air attack or any other danger.

The new house on the Bemberg in Hemer

Playing with Yvonne and Bernd in front of the new house

First Years in Switzerland

In September 1942, aged 13, I was sent to an official German school abroad: Das Fridericianum, in Davos, Switzerland, where I studied until the end of the war. (The school is mentioned several times in Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain*.) The education was strict, and we weren't allowed to leave the school grounds except for skiing. Except for skiing! This meant that during the long winter months my friends and I could ski almost every day. Another great advantage was that the Bolgen, the world's first T-bar ski lift, had opened just a few years previously on the other side of the river from our school. And the Schatzalpbahn, a funicular, was located just behind our school; one rode it up to Schatzalp and then, after a short walk to Strela, one could take another ski lift up from there.

During downhill races, the Strelaschuss (literally, Strela Shot) was our big test. If we could manage it at speed, we had skill. One time I crashed while coming out of it, at the point where the piste leveled off but my speed was still high. A rescue sledge arrived immediately from the Strela Pass. Then, at the end of the Schatzalpbahn, the sledge was hooked behind a horse-drawn sleigh headed for the nearest hospital. There was a painful haematoma on one of my feet, which meant I had to use crutches for a while. Back then, skis had Kandahar bindings and steel edges around the wood, but safety bindings were still in the future.

Despite the risks, skiing and hiking were great ways for us to explore our wonderful natural surroundings. This connection with nature, especially around mountains, has stayed with me to this day.

Switzerland was a paradise, not only of skiing and nature but also of peace and food. The only event of war we witnessed in Davos was on a day when German fighter planes were chasing several already damaged Allied bombers through the skies close above our school.

A nanny holding Bernd; me, Yvonne and our father, around 1941

Our Fridericianum class, Davos, probably 1943; I'm third on the left, beside our teacher, Alfred Eggers, known as Mr Ali; Tanno Schild (see pp. 21 and 27), is third from the right (with pale hair)

My first time on skis, with a school friend (right), on the world's first T-bar ski lift (the Bolgen in Davos), 1942; never having our own lessons, we learned by watching others and overhearing their instructors

From the school tower we watched the Germans shooting the Allies down, and those crews bailing out under parachutes. They landed in a valley close to Davos, hopefully not on the glacier. I never heard whether they survived.

It was generally good if American pilots could land their damaged planes in Zurich. The crew would be 'interned' in a big hotel in Davos and obviously, under the circumstances, it was not the worst that could happen to them. They had lots of freedom and were given around SFr 500 per month, a great deal at the time. They could even go skiing, though most had to learn first. We students found their slow speed embarrassing, and so we played tricks on them, like catching up to them from behind and skiing right over the back of their skis. The poor guys would fall and, thinking they had been in our way, they would apologize. We should have felt more ashamed.

Being late in returning to school one day, I decided to take the toboggan-run down. There was a rule against doing that, but it would be faster. Suddenly there was something ahead on the path. I was going fast but could bend down and pick it up. A wallet. Towards the end of the run, on a toboggan, sat an American soldier and his girlfriend. By now having really no time to stop, I skied on to the school and checked the wallet there. It contained SFr 500 ! I was tempted to keep it but felt guilty: 500 was too much. So I told my teacher, knowing that normally one could expect a 10 % reward. Instead, a meeting of several of the teachers decided that it would be wrong to keep 'enemy money'. I had to give the 10 % to the Red Cross, and of course later was grateful that I was made to do so. The remaining 90 % was successfully returned to its owner. In 2011, I wrote an article for the *Davoser Revue (No. 86)* about my years at the Fridericianum.

During this time, one of my eyes swelled shut. Several doctors tried but couldn't determine a cause. Finally Dr Secretan, an ear-nose-throat specialist (who later contracted polio), diagnosed an infection that had reached the bone above the eye, causing an abscess. I was sent to hospital, where initially ice was applied for the bad headache and fever; then came one of the first synthetic antibiotics, probably Prontosil – plus cocaine into the nose as pain relief.

The hospital alerted my mother, but she couldn't travel due to the war, so my mother's mother came from Orbe in Switzerland. She was shocked when she saw that my hair had turned curly, which is what had happened to her older son shortly before he died.

Then a hospital doctor arrived with a hammer and chisel and opened the bone from two sides. He cleaned it out by flushing it through with a liquid, after which everything healed quickly. Though by then I had had several doses of cocaine, there was no addiction. At the end, Dr Secretan warned that if the problem returned, he would need to remove the bone. God thanks that never happened.

Later, I was struck by pleurisy, a kind of lung infection. Before I could make it from our classroom to my bed, a nurse found me and saw that I could hardly breathe. She carried me to my room, then came back with an injection that helped immediately. The doctor confirmed she had done the right thing.

Nazism in Davos

Sometime during 1942, the Fridericianum was made the property of an association controlled by representatives of the Nazi Party in Germany and Switzerland. (Following the end of the war, and a referendum, it was bought by the Davos region and became the foundation Schweizerische Alpine Mittelschule Davos. My brother Charles studied there for a while.) But I don't remember any of us in my class noticing propaganda on a day-to-day basis. We had access to English newspapers, and our English teacher even asked us to read Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

On the other hand, much later I read an account by a former student of Jewish heritage, older than me so not in the same class. He spoke of a teacher targeting him and other

students for being Jewish, and the student left the Fridericianum in 1943.

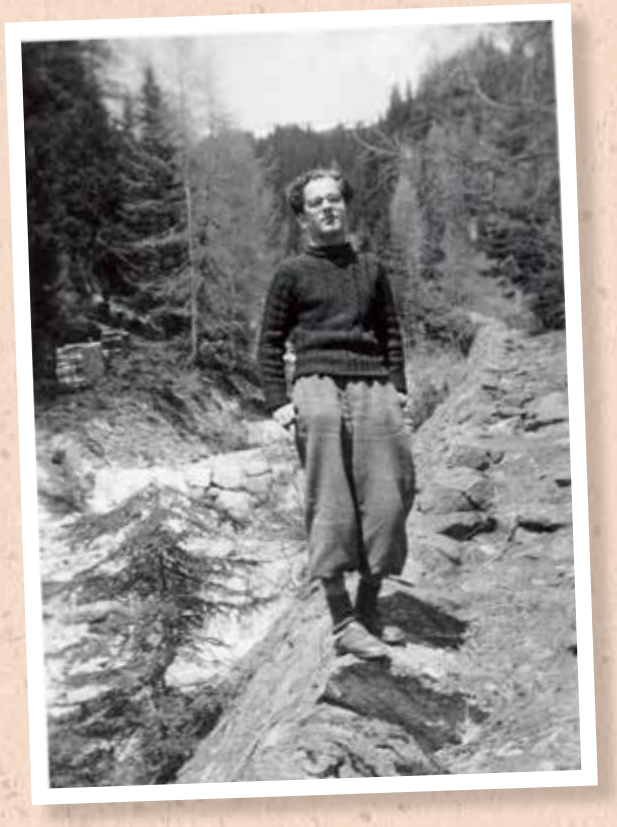
From the local German consulate, however, a Mr Ryckert would show up once a week to give speeches and make us march in the courtyard. We were supposed to be *Hitlerjungvolk*, and we had to swear to be "tough, silent and loyal".

In 1943, *Hitlerjungvolk* and older *Hitlerjugend* from throughout Switzerland came together in Zurich to travel via special train to a youth camp near Freiburg im Breisgau. It was meant to be tough: sleeping on straw, eating mainly salted herring, drilling on the football pitch. At one point an air raid siren went off (towards the end of the war, Freiburg was almost completely destroyed by bombing). Then there was an excursion to see Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* at the city opera; afterwards, in the night, we had to march back for kilometres. The one good thing was that my parents came to see me towards the end of the camp. And once it was all over, how happy my classmates and I were when we finally saw the Davos mountains again!

At age 15, one had to swear allegiance to Hitler. Ryckert threatened to send us "gentlemen's boys home to the *Reich*" if we didn't try to be good *Hitlerjugend*. We also had to sing Nazi songs. One of the songs sounded very fierce: *"Heilig Vaterland! In Gefahren deine Söhne sich um dich scharen."* ("Holy fatherland! In dangers your sons rally round you.") Another song included: "Today, Germany belongs to us – tomorrow, the whole world."

I hated this Nazi business and was glad that my father and grandfather were also against it. Their stance was very dangerous: they could have been shot. Young people were encouraged to denounce their parents. Listening to the BBC could bring a death sentence. I grew long hair, partly out of protest and partly to be 'cool'. Ryckert sent me for a Nazi haircut: short, with shaved sides. Afterwards, my classmates gathered round and laughed in good humour.

One time, he rented a large hall in a hotel so that we could sing for the people of Davos. It was a huge success and must have appeared impressive, all of us standing straight and serious in white shirts and socks and black shorts. We sang not only Nazi songs but also nice songs like: "Let youth, youth take its course! / Pretty girls grow up again and again, / Let youth take its course."



In Davos, probably 1945

Thankfully the end of the war brought an end to all this. I would then have agreed, following Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell:* "We swear to be a nation of true brothers / Never to part in danger or in death! / We swear we will be free, as were our sires, / And sooner die than live in slavery!"

War Experiences at Home

During summer holidays and Christmas breaks, students were allowed to return home, something that became increasingly difficult as the war raged on. Perhaps it was during Christmas 1942, back home, that I first witnessed night-time

View of Hemer from the Bemberg; our fence and gate are visible at the bottom of the photo. I learned to throw quite far on the Bemberg. There were many stones there and I practised a lot. At one point in Davos, in summer on the winter ice rink, my throws were measured at about 70 m. My friend Edgar Hämmerle (see pg. 30) could throw a bit farther.

bombing raids, which continued throughout the war.

German officials had been given the right to stay in the houses of civilians. In our house lived the German commander, Von Wussow, of the Hemer *Stalag*, or internment camp, which held more than 50,000 prisoners, many of them from Russia. I remember our family spending several nights in our bomb shelter, side by side with him. At some point three bombs hit close to where we were – boom! ... Boom! ... BOOM! – and I was sure we would be next. The bombs fell even closer to a local hospital; perhaps it had some lights on. Fortunately, the hospital wasn't hit and no one was killed in that attack. At the end of the war, the no-doubt-starving prisoners were freed, and Von Wussow fled.

In fact, there were two hospitals in Hemer, one Protestant and one Catholic – this in a town of 7,000 inhabitants. At the end of the war, the population doubled due to people arriving from eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia and other nearby countries. The Commune carefully allocated housing. Firewood gathering for heating was allowed in the forest behind our house. Food was scarce all over the country. But the refugees enriched Hemer. The next director of the school and several new teachers were drawn from those who had arrived as refugees, and it was the same for two important managers in our company.

On other nights, we children – Yvonne (born in 1935), Bernd and I – stayed with our parents in their big bed. Anxious and unable to sleep, I would listen to the thunder of the bombers; some nights there were thousands of bombers overhead. Next to me, my father would be snoring.

In the summer of 1943 many, many hundreds of planes bombed Cologne, which we could see burning on the horizon. Taking a train in Zurich while returning home in early summer 1944, I heard the newspaper sellers shouting, *"Invasion in der Normandie! Invasion in der Normandie!"* Whenever Dortmund was bombed, we could see enormous spotlights searching for Allied planes. When one was spotted, it would be shot down by German fighter planes and anti-aircraft artillery. Hundreds of bombers were shot down nightly over the whole of Germany.

At one point, a German army unit ran training exercises in our garden. Probably it was the house's being on a hill that suited their purposes. I remember watching two soldiers, flat on the snow-covered ground behind some shrubs, firing machine guns through the foliage.

One day during the 1944 summer holidays, I was walking alone over an open hill behind one of the hospitals. Suddenly a military plane stormed through the low clouds, directly above me. I couldn't hear anything other than the tremendous engine noise. The next day, walking that way again, I saw an irregular line of machine-gun fire traces just beside the path. They had opened fire on me! Increasingly, the Allies were shooting at anything that moved, and my Hemer friends, who couldn't escape to Switzerland as I had, needed to hide whenever they heard a plane.

The End of the War

As the end of the war approached, my parents told me that American soldiers were firing artillery in the forest behind our house. They had encircled the heavily bombed region of Hemer and Iserlohn, and thousands of armed German soldiers were trapped there. My parents witnessed the Germans being made prisoners of war, saw them walking down behind the Bemberg to Hemer.

All in all, our family was extremely lucky. None of us were made to fight, as the men were not the right ages, my father's company never made munitions, none of us died, nothing of ours was destroyed or taken away. The vast suffering of tens of millions of others is an unfathomable horror and eternal disgrace.

At the end of the war in Europe, in May 1945, some of the Fridericianum students who had no family in Switzerland were interned in empty, old hotels in remote places like Churwalden, Parpan and Seewis. Again I was fortunate, being able to stay at La Couronne, my mother's parents' hotel-café in Orbe, Canton de Vaud, in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. I lived there for two and a half years with Grandmother Marguerite (née Heuby, 1889–1970), Grandfather Arthur Reymond (1886–1971), and Great-grandmother Louise Capt Reymond.

When I could, I visited some of my interned school friends, and am still in contact with a few of them. One such visit was to Churwalden, in the far east of Switzerland. During that time, three of us decided to ski tour to Arosa, which would have been about four hours away. We left quite late in the day, however, and in fog. After an hour, we were back where we'd started. I suggested we return to Churwalden, but the others wanted to continue. We started again: up, up, up, and we could see the lights of Lenzerheide through the fog. Eventually we emerged from the fog but by then the sun had set. We could hear avalanches and even feel the wind they kicked up. Then, in the direction of Arosa, we heard dogs barking, dogs probably searching for missing people. Eventually a huge wall of rock confronted us. There was nothing we could do but turn back. We came across places too steep to ski down, so we had to ski-jump down, thankfully into soft, deep snow. We arrived back in Churwalden at midnight. The pub was still open, and they gave us some tea. One of my friends fainted. The scarf I had put around my face was frozen. We were lucky to have survived.

THE NICEST PERIOD OF MY YOUTH

Marguerite and Arthur Reymond's hotel-café, Hôtel de la Couronne in Orbe, Switzerland, where I lived after the war

Orbe and the Reymonds

The period I spent in Orbe was the nicest of my youth. I went to the college (high school) there as an 'external student', 16–18 years old. I didn't have to go but went anyway. It was very close to La Couronne, about 700 m away, so I would run to class every morning and again in the afternoon after lunch. I would leave when the big church bell began its 8 o'clock or 3 o'clock ringing and could arrive on time. This training allowed me to beat the school's sports champion at a race. The teacher claimed it was just that I was one or two years older. He didn't know about my daily sprints.

During this time, I began having some minor health problems, particularly dizziness. The local doctor came and diagnosed *chagrin d'amour*. This was amazing to me, because it was correct. I had become totally smitten with a girl whom I'd been helping with German lessons. Then one day I saw her flirting with another boy. The heartbreak was terrible, and I was very deeply discouraged.

But mountains were not too far away. The Suchet was just above Orbe. At 1,588 m above sea level, it's one of the highest in the Jura range. We went there for ski camps, where I was a ski instructor for my friends, who called me a *Schneehase* (snow hare). Jacques Filliol was the least experienced. So when we had a ski slalom competition I suggested, "Take it easy, don't hurry, don't fall." He finished first, because all the others went too fast and fell.

I was also part of the Christian Youth (the Boy Scouts who organized the camps), and a member of the school choir. We sang often, as scouts and as students. One song, with music by Gluck, had the nice lyrics *"L'amour triomphe, et tout ce qui respire sert l'Empire de la beauté."* ("Love triumphs, and everything that breathes serves the Empire of Beauty.")

Our class even went on two great two-day hikes. The first was from Zermatt (1,620 m) to the Gornergrat ridge (3,135 m), and back. The Gornergrat has a great view towards the Matterhorn and towards Monte Rosa, with its Dufourspitze (4,634 m) being the highest peak in Switzerland. (I climbed it twice, much later, with my mountain guide Andreas.) Our class's second long excursion was from Kandersteg (1,174 m) to Lötschental over the Lötschen Pass (2,676 m).

In 1946 news arrived of Grandmother Magdalene's death, in Schiltach at age 75. Unfortunately it was impossible for me to return to Germany for the funeral.

In Orbe I often used Grandfather Arthur's old military bicycle. Two or three times I rode towards Lake Geneva to the sand beach at Préverenges;

The Reymonds in Orbe, Switzerland: Grandmother Marguerite, Ruth (my mother), Aunt Lucy, Uncle Johnny in front, and Grandfather Arthur

Bernd, our mother and Yvonne visiting me in Orbe, 1947: one can see how thin they were

The Belgian commander's son, wife, me and my mother on a pier on Lake Constance during our trip from Singen to Hemer, 1947

also several times along the Lake of Neuchâtel to the sand beach at Yvonand. (Twenty-three years later I went there by car with my sons from our house in Echandens. John thought it was the sea, because of the sand.) During one hot summer, probably in 1947, I borrowed a friend's bike – with gears! – and toured Switzerland. From Orbe I rode through Zurich, visited a friend in Arosa, went over the mountains, and back through Valais/Wallis. When I arrived at the crossroads square of Place Saint-François in Lausanne, a traffic officer, wearing white gloves, blew his whistle and generously waved me through the non-existent traffic. Later, back in Germany,

I enjoyed cycling to the factories in Lahr and Hemer. In fact, I continued cycling until my 80s, keeping bicycles in the places where I lived or stayed for long periods: Germany, Switzerland, California, India and England.

Grandmother Marguerite was a wonderful woman with endless love for children. She was happy to spoil me, often bringing me chocolate, or a nicely patterned sweater or socks that she'd knitted. The sweater lasted for 30 years, and the socks are still in good shape after more than 70!

She was an excellent cook, with a big kitchen where she could feed the whole family plus boarders. There were two boarders I remember: Mr Ferrari, a road sweeper, and Mr Ferrario, a road builder from Italy who spoke funny French. Upstairs there was a small dining room – connected to the kitchen by a dumbwaiter (a hand-operated box-lift) – where hotel guests would be served when they ordered a special meal. Occasionally I went with my grandmother to the cellar where trout were kept in a basin. She would kill one right there and fry it immediately. It was very fresh and tasted good to my pre-vegetarian self. (When I was a little boy my mother took me to the butcher's in Schiltach. He gave me a *Wurst* but I was disgusted and gave it back. My father then scolded my mother, claiming she had spoiled me. Fifty years later, I stopped eating meat completely after being struck when J. Krishnamurti stated, "We eat dead animals.") She also kept rabbits in a cage in the garage and grew flavourful tomatoes and blackberries. It took years and my grandmother's garden produce for me to eat tomatoes again after having been sickened by them while on holiday as a child.

My grandparents purchased beer for La Couronne from Brasserie Fertig, the owners of which had a much-admired Jaguar cabriolet. Once I went there with my grandfather to collect our beer order, and enjoyed rolling the full barrel home along the road. The beer barrels were cooled using big blocks of ice, which Brasserie Fertig would deliver. (Before electric refrigeration, ice would be cut from a lake in La Vallée de Joux and sent by train, even all the way to Paris.) Whenever I helped to serve customers, I was allowed to skim off the beer foam for myself. It was fun observing the café guests too, many of whom were craftsmen, or guards at the large Bochuz Prison, which Marguerite called *le grand palace* due to its many lights shining all night. The local pharmacist always stopped by at the end of the day to drink a Campari. If anyone became too drunk, Marguerite would take him by the collar and push him out. Though she was small, she was energetic.

She also did the washing for the whole hotel, all by hand in the little garden building where she heated water and soap together. The entire process would take two days and one night, but not every week. She would also wash Arthur's tailor-made suits, as there was no dry cleaning then. She told me it was difficult to iron the suits and get them back in good form.

Thankfully there was an occasional employee to help Marguerite with her many tasks. And the heating of water for bathing was the job of anyone who wanted to get clean. The person would go to the hotel's *one bathroom* to get a fire going in the wood-burning stove there, which had a container for water above it. Once heated, the water could be emptied straight into the bathtub. Arthur took a bath once every two weeks – whether he needed it or not. I took a bath once per week, and he claimed I'd soon grow fins like a fish.

Arthur took care of the administration. He also spoke and sang and played cards with the café customers. For a while, he was a representative for the winemaker Clos du Renard, now Clos aux Renards. He would ride his bicycle to visit customers, perhaps helping them to sample the wines. One day he rode into a vineyard and promptly crashed. He had an interesting history. After working at the famous watchmaker Jaeger-LeCoultre in La Vallée de Joux, where he met Marguerite, he became a well-known watchmaker himself. He was one of the first in Switzerland to create ring-watches (a watch on a finger ring). But he went bankrupt during the

Great Depression when his American customers could no longer pay. He and Marguerite moved to Lausanne, and later bought La Couronne.

My friend Tanno Schild (see pp. 13 and 27) stayed a while as my guest at La Couronne. Sometimes we had to help with the dishwashing, which I hated. We also had to help sand the floor of the hotel ballroom, where an orchestra sometimes played so people could dance. It was a lot of work, using just steel wool.

One day we ate a whole Vacherin, a nice, soft, unpasteurized cheese sold in a wooden box. Arthur proclaimed, *"Quelle appétit!"* ("What an appetite!") in such a distinctive way that to this day I like to imitate the way he said it. My grandparents and I had many meals together in the big kitchen. Whenever his authority was questioned, Arthur would declare, most seriously, *"C'est moi le patron. C'est moi qui commande."* ("I'm the boss. I'm in charge.") But the real boss was Marguerite.

I was a confidant to my grandmother, as Arthur could be rather mean with her. (Even worse was Uncle Paul Ernest, though she had doted on him after her first son, Johnny, had died.) She once told me that she had stolen SFr 500 from Arthur's wallet, because he never gave her enough money for the necessary shopping. A police detective came, but I don't think he found anything. He also questioned me. I had quite a lot of money hidden behind my radio, and he must have seen it, but it wasn't stolen. One always got stamps at the shops for pasting in a booklet, and when the booklet was full one got cash for it. That was my income. And it was substantial, because my grandmother always needed lots of supplies. Once one of my Orbe friends stole some money from me when he thought I was asleep, and I demanded it back.

In my grandparents' later years, when they lived alone in La Vallée de Joux, we spoke together on the phone regularly. Usually it was Marguerite who answered. She was around the house all day, making breakfast, lunch and supper for Arthur. But one time, Arthur answered. As I was surprised, I asked, "Are you alone?" And he insisted, "Yes! As always!" He wasn't constantly grumpy, however. Years earlier, the first time I ever shaved, I took one of his Gillette razors. He realized this and wasn't angry. And I still use Gillettes.

When Marguerite died in 1970 at age 81, he told us: *"Elle était mie."* ("She was sweet.") At the burial, he confided: *"Ce sera bientôt mon tour."* ("It will soon be my turn.") When I doubted this, he reminded me: *"Il ne faut pas se faire d'illusions."* ("One shouldn't have illusions.") And soon he passed away.

In late spring 1947, my mother, Yvonne and Bernd (another brother, Charles, would be born in South Africa in 1952) came to visit me in Orbe. Bernd was about 7 and had never seen an orange. He bit into the first one he got, peel included.

Aunt Lucy – my mother's sister, who lived much of her adult life in Morocco with her husband, Robert Ramelet (my son Christoph was very fond of her) – then sent us big boxes of fruit from their orange farm. The farm was eventually confiscated, and the king now has apricots growing there. Lucy later visited the place, though she was wary of meeting some of the old workers. Her husband had sometimes been overly harsh with those caught stealing, even beating some of them. When Lucy did meet one of those workers, he was proudly defiant.

During my family's visit to Orbe, I took Bernd to the Suchet. To get there one had to cycle to the village below the mountain and then walk up on skis. Climbing skins attached under skis prevent sliding and allow one to walk straight up. I put Bernd and the skis on the bicycle; he told me later that it was tricky to sit straight on the metal bar. Skiing down, I tried to keep him standing upright on the back of my skis. Unsuccessful! He flew spectacularly in an arc before hitting the snowy ground – fortunately unhurt. We continued, Bernd walking beside a very slowly skiing older brother. He has never forgotten this expedition and still talks about it.

Another of our adventures was at the River Orbe, where there are many slippery volcanic/tuff rocks. After manoeuvring over them to enter

the river, I looked over to Bernd and the water was up to his neck! He had slipped into one of the holes common in this kind of rock.

Another Bernd story: I was studying in Davos when, around 5 years old, he wanted to ride the tram in Hemer. (One could go all the way to Dortmund by tram.) The little trip was arranged, and he was given the money for his ticket, which he held tightly in his fist, eager to pay. But during the whole ride, nobody asked him to buy a ticket. Absolutely furious and not knowing what else to do, he threw the money onto the floor of the tram. To this day I can imagine how frustrated the poor guy must have been.

The Journey Home

The family stayed with me in Orbe well into the summer, until they had to return home. I tried to go with them back to Germany, but in Basel the authorities stopped me. There were French, American and British zones ahead, and I would have needed a visa for each of them.

The occupying forces in Germany had confiscated many houses after the war, including part of ours in Hemer. During the American occupation, my parents were moved into their garage. Afterwards, there was a British commander who allowed my parents to stay with him in the house. At the end of my time in Orbe, there was a Belgian colonel in residence who had been assigned to the British zone.

A few months after the refusal in Basel, my mother returned to the border to help me. By then she had learned that I could cross into the French zone only at Singen, so I had taken a train there. She came in a small car with the Belgian colonel, his wife and their adult son. In tears, my mother begged the French commander to let me through, with the Belgian colonel watching the whole proceeding. My transit was allowed. My relieved and grateful mother, along with the colonel and his family, received me on the other side; porters brought my big travelling trunk, which had been left on the train platform. Five adults in the small car along with a big trunk, we must have been quite a sight. But I was on my way home.

As Singen is not too far from Lake Constance, the colonel's wife wanted everyone to see the water. We took a detour, but bad weather prevented good views. More delays followed. Many bridges had been destroyed during the war; most traffic signs were gone; no petrol was available; we pushed the car; a thunderstorm formed. Finally, we arrived at a special station where the colonel could buy petrol.

From then on, it was downhill, literally, and the border crossings were easy. Seeing the colonel in his uniform, the American and British guards, each with a small salute, let us through. What a long and difficult trip. Even in the middle of the night it was a wonder when Hemer came into view.

When the Belgians left, the Canadians arrived. A Canadian priest stayed with us, claiming he felt closer to God up on the Bemberg. Yet for years, abandoned heavy artillery cannons remained on the hill above our house, and we kept finding munitions there too. We could also see a big German tank abandoned on a small hill across the valley.

Bernd enjoyed roaming about in nature. He made friends with a shepherd called Braukmann and spent long hours with him and the sheep around the shepherd's caravan. There were also remnants of the war to discover – everyone found them interesting. One day, Bernd took some of the cartridges he had found and put them in his pockets. He also made a small fire, not far from home, and placed some cannon shells on it. Hoping for a spectacle, he sat on a nearby fence and waited … and waited. Finally bored, he left. Suddenly, we heard a huge explosion. I almost fell from the chair I was sitting on though I was in my room at the other end of the house. It was an enormous explosion. There is no doubt that Bernd would have died had he remained on that fence for just a while longer.

In front of the new Mercedes-Benz Nürburg, probably 1930: Heinz Mathauer (Senior), Hans Junior, my mother, Aunt Lieschen and my father

Yvonne in our Bemberg garden with her beloved donkey, probably 1940

My mother and a cousin, with me in the middle, in front of the Nürburg, early 1930s

Hans Senior, standing, with Hans Junior at the controls and my father at the back, 'riding pillion'

THE POST-WAR YEARS

Grohe Armaturen

The strongest currencies after the war were cigarettes and coffee. If you had enough of them, you could exchange them for almost anything. Later, with the reform of 1948, Reichsmarks were out and Deutsche Marks were in. Everyone received DM 60 to begin again.

It was the start of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the phenomenal rebuilding of Germany and Austria. Almost everything was in demand, including our products. The orders came so quickly that the business needed to expand, but finding available workers was difficult. (I began following the newspaper reports on the country's coal production: every day it was going up.) It was in this economic climate that my father renamed his company Friedrich Grohe Armaturenfabrik, known as Grohe Armaturen. Nine-year-old Bernd joked, "Now he will have his name smeared everywhere!"

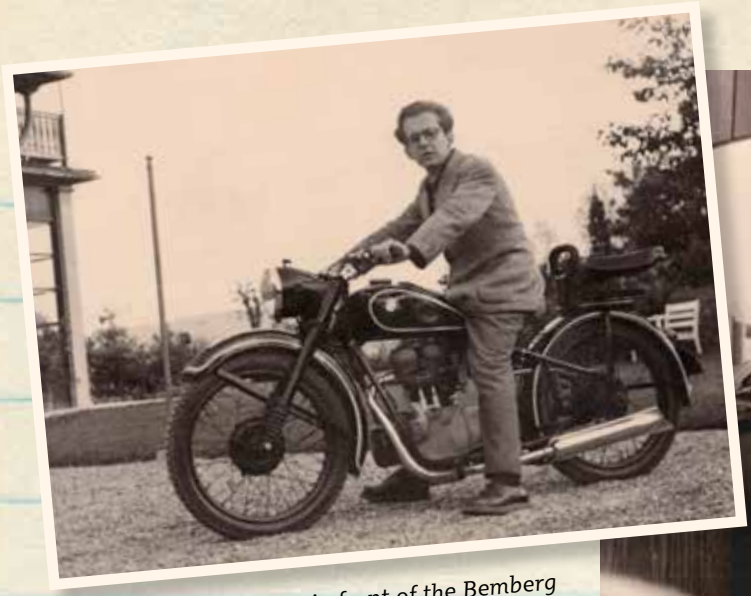
In our family, we were all very critical of each other. We children were even allowed to criticize our parents. The Belgian colonel took note of this with some surprise. Bernd, who as a young boy would sometimes become furious, once called our father a "*Saukerl*" ("bastard") to his face. Our father wrote this story to me in a joking tone.

Hans Senior already owned a Bugatti sports car, which he called the Kaputi, and a Mercedes-Benz Nürburg. (The first time that a car I was in went 100 km/h, or 62 mph, was in 1947, when I was 17. It was in the Orbe notary's new Citroën, full of friends, on the flat stretch between Orbe and Arnex-sur-Orbe. A big deal!) An interest in cars has continued through the generations, with my parents, with me, with Uncle Klaus driving in sports car rallies, and with my sons. My older son, Christoph, buys, restores and sells classic cars. And as for motorcycles, at one point Hans Junior and my father had a motorbike with attachable sidecar. Occasionally they would ride through Schiltach too fast and, unable to hold one of the curves, would find themselves halfway up the church *Stapfeln* (steps). Imagine my amazed delight when, in time, my father bought me one of the first BMW motorcycles (250 ccm).

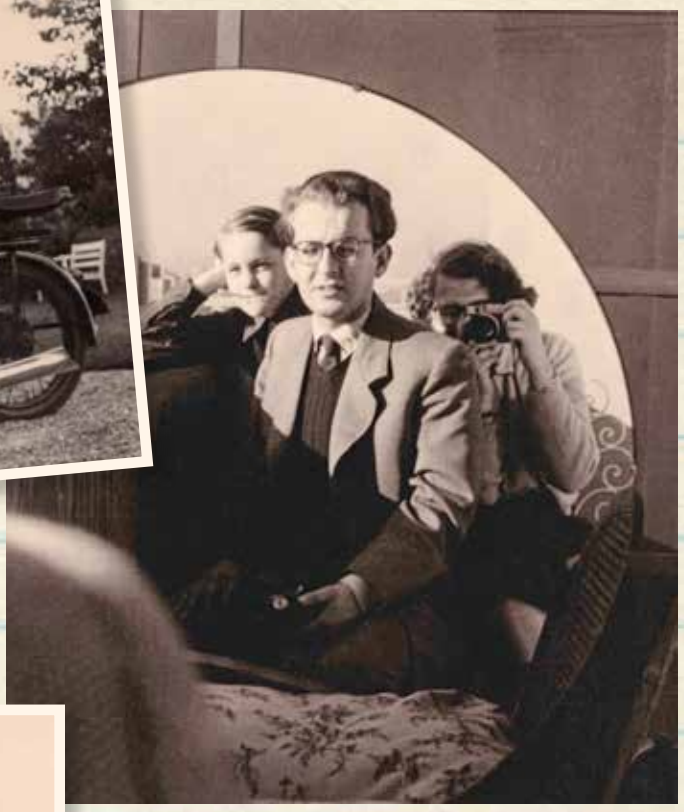
I'd earned my driving license as soon as possible – the year before, at age 18. At that time, petrol was still so hard to come by, and rationed, that bringing one's own petrol to driving lessons was a requirement. Luckily I could bring enough from the company. Of course, I believed I was the best driver. I always wanted to be the driver, and driving became a big part of my young adult life, without incident.

I had many cars over the years: slower ones like the Opel Kadett, and a silver Borgward Isabella, a very modern car for its time; then one of the early Jaguar Limousines; even one of the first VW Golfs; then a Mercedes cabriolet and a Mercedes coupé, before a few BMWs. At some point I had a Porsche sportscar. I sold it not long after buying it, because speed limits meant it couldn't be driven faster than a BMW anyway, plus the Porsche was smaller and used much more fuel. Later in life, in Rougemont with a train station a few minutes' walk away, I preferred taking the reliable and more ecological trains, from which one can closely watch the landscape. For 15 years I had no car at all.

Anyway, I was studying for my Abitur in Hemer and occasionally rode the new motorbike to school. This caused some envy, even among the teachers. The school director told my father that the situation was very bad, as everyone else had bicycles. Through the company, we could acquire things that most people couldn't. Once, upon seeing that I had a leather briefcase, one of my teachers joked that "it will invite class hate". Having missed a school year during the war, I passed my exams in 1949. After my Abitur



On the BMW 250 ccm, in front of the Bemberg house, probably 1949



Yvonne taking a picture of Bernd, me and herself in a mirror on the balcony of the Airline Hotel in Johannesburg, 1949

Riding the BMW 500 ccm, South Africa, 1950

Alice Holbing (née Ramelet), Aunt Lucy's daughter, on the back of the BMW 500 ccm, probably 1951

presentation on Erich Kästner's book *Fabian: The Story of a Moralist*, a government inspector told me that I had a natural intelligence. This gave me a boost, because I never liked most of the Abitur studies and never considered myself intelligent. Probably I earned the diploma because I could speak French perfectly.

South Africa

In May 1949, Germany was divided into West Germany allied to the West, and East Germany allied to the Soviet Union. Our lives and businesses in and around Hemer were in the west, but my father had feared the Russians for too long. He decided it would be safer in South Africa. South Africa was experiencing unprecedented growth after the war, and he planned for us to develop a new branch of the business there – Cobra Brassware. In turn, our move was encouraged by the South African government. We didn't yet know about the apartheid regime.

Initially, we stayed at the Airline Hotel in Johannesburg where, at 5 o'clock each morning whether we wanted it or not, someone from room service would kindly bring us tea.

Soon a shipment of faucet parts from Hemer arrived in Durban. A German engineer, Herr Hietschold, had organized rental space for us at the docks, and he and I rode the train there from Johannesburg. My new BMW motorcycle (500 ccm), one of the first of this model, had also arrived from Germany. In those days, one had to 'break in' new vehicles, driving them very slowly for a period. I didn't have time to do this before leaving Germany, and the motorcycle dealer had been more than happy to do it for me.

The DC3 that I flew in from Düsseldorf to London, 1949

One time walking along the beach, I noticed a number of cars parked next to the dock. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw people sitting ghost-like inside them, gazing out at the view. And whales were being killed there. Their blubber was being boiled for the extraction of oil. Everything seemed, and smelled, horrific.

We stayed in Durban for two to three weeks. Someone in our hotel informed us that eating a hard-boiled egg every morning would kill us. But this was also where I first had green salad combined with fruit, which I liked very much.

Three of us – the engineer, a black colleague and I – assembled each of the several hundred faucets. Our sales manager for South Africa, Paul Schultz, then sold our products all over the country. And that's how our first income in South Africa was achieved.

(Paul had been seriously wounded while stationed in Sicily during the war – hit in the stomach. The medic who ran to him was killed by an artillery shell. Doctors immediately operated on Paul in an ambulance train, and he later had three quarters of his stomach removed. Before joining us, his secretary, Mrs Cohn, had been a South African radio commentator who frequently criticized Hitler and the Nazi state. She was a perfect secretary. Whenever Paul behaved badly, she would insist that he "Apologize immediately!" And he would! Later they married, and much later, by chance, I met them again in Davos.)

On the motorcycle journey back to Johannesburg, I realized too late that there were no more petrol stations before my destination. Eventually there was a white man relaxing on a patch of

grass near the road. When I asked him if he happened to have some petrol, he must have recognized my accent, because he greeted me with *"Heil Hitler"*. I was annoyed, and embarrassed. In the end, we managed to fill the tank by hand.

Each morning, in addition to enjoying fantastic sunrises, I would have a strange experience riding the motorcycle to the factory. In the early mornings there were always numerous newly dead animals on the roads. Having little experience of traffic, they weren't skilled at avoiding it. This meant groups of vultures feeding. Whenever I approached on the motorbike, they would begin to take off, but they would rise so slowly that I had to bend down to pass under them – an eerie feeling. Also there were no good helmets at the beginning of motorcycling. (Later, when I finally got one, people laughed at the sight of me.)

Our engineer and a local man on a Durban dock assembling Grohe *faucets, 1949*

Another time, while riding at speed on a good tar road, I saw I was quickly approaching a large yellow snake. Certain that I couldn't avoid it, I lifted my legs high off the footrests. A moment later, to my relief, the snake took off like lightning and disappeared into the grass and shrubs, narrowly avoiding being crushed.

Soon our family rented a house in the suburb of Northcliff, 15 km northwest of the centre of Johannesburg. And 25 km northwest of Northcliff, a new factory in Luipaardsvlei, Krugersdorp was being readied. Machines from Germany arrived by train from Durban, and it was always remarkable to watch the unloading. Black workers lifted, moved, and set down each item to the rhythm of a particular song they were singing. It wasn't long before the new Cobra Brassware factory could open. Generously, Hans Senior had helped my father by recruiting several specialist tool makers from the Black Forest and assisting them with their travel to South Africa. These specialists felt it was a relief to leave Germany and a privilege to go to South Africa, and a couple of them stayed on longer term, establishing their own businesses there. Herr Bühler, our technical director, visited me when I later lived in Buchillon, Switzerland. By then he had his own company, bigger than Cobra Brassware.

One of my friends from my early days in Davos was Tanno Schild from Zurich (see pp. 13 and 21), a great speed skater. We had often watched the races at the Davos open-air ice rink, the largest in Europe. (Tanno developed an interest in vintage cars and later had an old MG that, when started, would sound an alarm if the motor was too cold to be driven off. Unsurprisingly, this disturbed his neighbours early in the morning in the middle of Zurich.) He studied architecture and soon was designing a tower for the Lindt chocolate factory alongside Lake Zurich. With our family's help he moved to South Africa, where he became well known. He designed my parents' new house there, close to the factory. During the process, he announced that costs shouldn't matter, which of course scandalized my father.

From the beginning, I was repelled by apartheid. The most complex work was reserved for whites, and we were forbidden from asking black people to help with it. I was responsible for the dispatch department and its bookkeeping, but also enjoyed nailing the wooden crates shut that would carry our faucets all over South Africa and its neighbouring countries, and became quite good at it. Two black colleagues were excellent at stocktaking and the preparation of parcels. I told my white colleagues that if apartheid continued, after 50 years the whites would be expelled. This was not quite accurate but, after 40-some years, official white-rule did come to an end.

Several friends among our toolmakers from Germany and I had some great parties together. At one point I took a black worker for a ride on my motorcycle. One of them saw this and told me not to do it again, otherwise there would be trouble. One time, an English-speaking neighbour wanted to show us what a good shot she was. Like many people, she was afraid of being robbed. She told one of her servants to hold up a newspaper, then from quite some distance away she shot through the paper. The employee survived this crazy demonstration, God thanks.

Back to Switzerland

My father wanted me to begin my university studies in South Africa. After around nine months in the country, however, I'd had enough. I left in 1950 with the excuse that I wanted to study in the University of St. Gallen's famous Department of Economics. I'd considered psychology or art, but the university syllabus made me realize I'd be more confused than ever if I studied psychology, and the art involved too many theories. A hint that there might be father-son difficulties ahead was that I had to pay my return ticket myself.

It was a nerve-wracking flight on a four-engine propeller plane. Not long after take-off, we had to make an emergency landing back in Johannesburg. Once airborne for the second time, a snowstorm developed. The pilot quickly dipped us below the clouds and brought us back up equally quickly. There was hardly time for pressure compensation, and because of this I suffered from terrible headaches for weeks.

The next stage of the journey was a Panair do Brasil flight from Lisbon to Zurich. The plane didn't arrive, however, and I stayed the night, flying out the next morning. Finally approaching Zurich, we flew into another snowstorm; we had to circle for a long time while the runway was cleared. I ended up staying a night there too, in a new, small hotel on Bahnhofstrasse. The cost was SFr 20 – quite expensive at the time. Bahnhofstrasse led to the lake and many famous shops, but because of the headaches I went to see a doctor. When Uncle Klaus visited the same doctor years later, they could see that I'd been a long-ago patient there.

After this difficult trip back from South Africa, I'd had enough of flying and didn't take a plane again for 20 years. Whenever I needed to get to America I travelled by ship, from Hamburg or Bremen or Southampton, and once even from Genoa.

The rest of the family left South Africa in 1952, when my youngest sibling, Charles, was just a few months old. Charles grew to be the tallest of us. He is also 23 years younger than me! On a return trip in 1955, our parents took him to Kruger National Park, where he saw an elephant. This made a great impression on him and, newly back in Germany, he regaled the company's receptionist with the story of the "ebabant". He ran to the end of the room and announced that the animal had such a long nose.

Just like Bernd, Charles was a lovely child. I loved my brothers dearly. I loved my sister, too, but it was a bit different with her. Once we were older, Aunt Lucy told me that when Yvonne was born, and I was 6, all attention went to her. My parents favoured Yvonne, and I'm sure I was envious. She ended up rather disobedient and somewhat wild. During a family walk through the village, while she was still little and not wanting to continue in the pouring rain, she simply sat

in the middle of the road. (Our father liked to call Yvonne *die Walze*, after the machine that compacts asphalt into tar roads, which 'walzes' or rolls flat everything in its path.) I tended to be gentle and, mostly, obedient. The contrast was highlighted when our parents went on holiday and entrusted our care to friends. Yet Yvonne looked up to me and defended me when my parents treated me unjustly. And she loved animals. During the war, we had a donkey, sheep, chickens and ducks, and Yvonne really looked after all of them with a lot of care and affection.

Training in the Grohe Factories

In the early 1950s, I began wondering what would happen to the company if my father didn't return from South Africa, as he'd already been there for several years. So, after some studying at St Gallen and the University of Cologne, I stopped academics and began training at Grohe Armaturen, gaining first-hand experience in each department. (Just prior to this, I entered a competition to come up with a slogan for note pads that would be handed out to customers, winning with "*Wer Grohe Armaturen wählt, liebt Fortschritt, Schönheit, Qualität.*" ["Those who choose Grohe Armaturen appreciate progress, beauty and quality."] Even earlier, while boarding in St Gallen, I was asked by a fellow boarder, working for Shell Oil, for help with some advertising text. I suggested something and he won a prize for it. He then tried to give me some money, but I didn't accept it.)

Plus, I worked for a short time at Hansgrohe. I remember Hans Senior first showing me around Hansgrohe's facilities. When we got to the packing section, he pointed to an employee and announced loudly, "She has the nicest legs!" She laughed. Later I travelled to Italy on a joint sales trip with Hans Junior, his wife, Tilde, her sister Eva, and her mother, a pharmacist, all from Alpirsbach. Hans Junior was always amazed by the higher prices we could get for our heavy faucets compared with Hansgrohe's lighter showers and their siphons for underneath basins and sinks. One night during that trip, he and I stayed with a customer until midnight. On our return, Tilde cried from relief. It was much more difficult in those days to keep in touch. We went to Rome, then visited Pompeii, and ended in Sorrento where we stayed at La Cocumella. It was there that I first saw lemons growing, which amazed me.

The Grohe company training, which included all departments of the factory and the administration, continued for four to five years, mainly in Hemer, with a short time at Kugler in Geneva. At that time, Swiss design was the best and an inspiration to us. The owner of Kugler had visited us in Hemer, then invited me to see their own factory. I did, and ended up staying a while. Their production volume in an entire year was what ours was in a week! Both Kugler and Similor (see pg. 34) still exist, partly thanks to the protective Swiss business norms and laws.

During my last year of training in the Hemer factory, I was able to introduce several

At the wheel of one of my first cars, around 1953

innovations. First was colour dynamics – particular ranges of colour for different room types – with help from the author of a book about it. Second was noise reduction, with advice from the Max Planck Institute. And third was re-planning the overall flow through the factory: how materials could best progress through the various departments, where each machine should be situated, where all the finished products should be stored; we even installed a pneumatic tube system to carry dispatch papers from the office end to the postroom end of the factory, saving a great deal of time and allowing shipments to go out more quickly. At the end of my time in Hemer, I was in charge of factory planning and also the building department itself, overseeing construction workers, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters and so on. This experience formed a good background for my later work in building up the new factory in Lahr (see pg. 34).

There's no set demand in faucet production. Sometimes products were sold out, sometimes stock would be sitting around. Mostly it depended on the wider economy. And when things were slow, my father tended to suspend workers, even though they would soon be needed again. Fortunately we had a wonderful technical director, Herr Halfmann, who, with his long experience working in the factory, could always offer good advice. He and I agreed that the next time there was an economic slowdown, we would continue production as usual. Soon enough this came about – luckily, while my father was in South Africa – and we even had to rent off-site warehouse space. But then demand returned, everything got sold quickly and we made lots of profit. We didn't inform my father of what we'd done; even Herr Halfmann called him "the father".

When a bottleneck developed in the chrome-plating department in Lahr, delaying dispatch, we instituted three working shifts per day to clear it. My father was convinced there would be trouble with the workers. But we paid extra wages to those working late and there was no problem at all.

In Hemer in 1953 there was a group of four bachelor friends, three of us having the great privilege of owning cars. We were Karl Borggräfe known as Kali, Manfred Huck known as *der Dicke* (the Fat One, though he was very slim), Reinhard Hessmer known as Sir, and me known as *der König*. I had dressed as a king for Carnival and played the role fully. Kali, der Dicke and Sir called themselves *das Volk* (the People). Later we were joined by Claude Baudat, whom I had met at school in Orbe, and Edgar Hämmerle known as *Schlotz*, from the school in Davos.

I could help Edgar go to South Africa to work in our company, though he ended up a journalist. And Claude came to Hemer to apprentice with an architect we knew. Amusingly, he was dismayed by the "excessively pointed" rooflines, or *Spitzdach*, in Germany compared with those in Switzerland. I introduced him to a local friend, Barbara, and he told me, "Give it up. She's not my type." I did give it up … but they did not. When Claude returned to Orbe, they agreed that Barbara would soon follow. They were to meet in Yverdon. But when she left the train, all she saw were signs that read Sortie. Not knowing French, and thinking she had stopped at the wrong station, she got back on the train and ended up in Lausanne. *Sortie* just means Exit! In the end, they had a long and happy marriage. Sadly, Claude died of lung cancer. Barbara Baudat and I are still in contact. She even helped me celebrate my 90th birthday.

Kali came to Grohe for a one-year apprenticeship. When my father saw that he was exceptionally bright, he promised him DM 1,000 per month to join the company afterwards. But when the time came, my father didn't keep his promise. Kali left and worked instead in a big steel factory, where he ended up on the board of directors. By coincidence, another of the directors was a friend of mine, Charlie, from the Fridericianum. In later life, after an operation to remove a brain tumour, Kali could hardly speak. Der Dicke, Sir and I were shaken by this, as we were used to his displays of intelligence. Bea Borggräfe, Kali's wife, and their daughter Karin and I still correspond.

Inge in 1958, several years after I met her and three years before we married

Der Dicke and Edgar drank too much alcohol and eventually died from it. But Sir underwent one of the first heart bypass surgeries, and he did well for some time. I'm still in contact with his wife, Edeltraud Hessmer, and their daughter Ellen.

Meeting Inge

We were inviting someone I knew from Hemer, Margot Praetsch, to a party when I noticed her younger sister, Inge, who was 16. I was impressed by Inge's beauty and how proudly she moved away when Margot got invited. So I made sure to invite Inge, too. We got her parents' permission, though she had to be home by 9 o'clock. Later, Inge studied in Dortmund to become a teacher, and I paid her fees, which came to more than half my salary. My father warned me not to get caught. I replied, "But she is sweet." He responded, "Yes, but that will change." This reminds me of a song that goes, "If you want to be happy in your life, never get married to a pretty wife." We married six years later, in La Vallée de Joux. I remember the minister declaring, "They think they know each other … but they will know each other."

Jazz

In the 1950s and into the 1960s, I sailed several times to New York. While there, I would visit jazz clubs, including the famous Birdland. There is even a song, Lullaby of Birdland. I heard John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Bill Evans, Ella Fitzgerald, Erroll Garner, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Oscar Peterson, and many more jazz greats. I loved it, apart from the fact that most of the other patrons would be eating, drinking and talking during the performances; unfortunately, this was accepted at the time. I would always leave at midnight and buy the next day's New York Times. Once during a pause at an Erroll Garner concert, I was standing outside, and Erroll Garner was standing in front of me. Soon an attractive woman walked by. He turned to me and winked. Recently, my taste has been rekindled for Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, J. S. Bach and some of the other composers in his family, plus other classical music composers. But I still love jazz and have over 700 jazz CDs.

THE BUSINESS AND FAMILY YEARS

Joining Grohe Armaturen

When I officially joined Grohe Armaturen in 1954, my father gave me a completely free hand. He rarely if ever praised anything I did, however. Although my parents privately scoffed at people with university educations, they would have preferred me to have earned a degree.

Hansgrohe and Grohe Armaturen began jointly attending trade fairs. During our first such event in Stuttgart, Hans Senior saw me at our stand and said I was a "fine fellow". I had invented a rotating platform on which we displayed our faucets, which continued to be used for years. On another occasion, when my mother and I were visiting him, he said I was kind. This provoked my mother into asking him, "And where did he get this kindness from?" – implying that it couldn't have been from his side of the family.

During my earlier training at the factory in Schiltach, I stayed at Hans Junior's place in Alpirsbach. Every morning I would ride my motorcycle to work. One day, I saw someone walking along the road who looked dishevelled, perhaps homeless. When I turned around to check, it was Hans Senior.

Major changes were set in motion in 1955 when, having loomed large over the entire family and over Hansgrohe for decades, Hans Senior died, in Schiltach, at age 84. His widow – his third wife, Emma known as Friedel, Klaus's mother – and my father were made limited partners in Hansgrohe, joining Hans Junior, Lenchen and Lieschen.

In the spring of 1956, I travelled to Morgantown, West Virginia, USA for a tour of Sterling Faucet Co. There was even a local newspaper article about it titled German Brass Expert Visits. This article was useful much later in the Hansgrohe lawsuit against Grohe Armaturen, in which Hansgrohe objected to our not using Friedrich as part of the name, claiming it created confusion for customers. We used Friedrich Grohe Armaturen during the lawsuit. An important factor in the case was which company had entered the US market earlier, and it was this article, along with my reports from New York, that showed that Grohe Armaturen was first. Hansgrohe lost the case and had to pay a great deal in costs and penalties.

Initially, my relationship with Sterling Faucet was very friendly. It didn't end well, however. I had been enthusiastic about their foundry system, which was different from ours, as well as their working speed, so I took photos. Then, when the owner returned from holiday, my camera films were confiscated and I was thrown out as a spy. I was sorry for John Hardesty, as he was the one who had invited me after having visited our company in Hemer.

I tried to sell our faucets in New York, but the American and European faucet norms were too different. Their products were also cheaper than ours and, I thought, not as well made. But, given the exchange rate, our products would have been affordable nevertheless. According to our net price list at the time, a bath mixer with hose and hand shower cost DM 21.25, or $ 5.70. In 1956 these were the exchange rates: $ 1.00 = DM 4.20 and SFr 4.37. In late-2022, $ 1.00 = € 0.94 and SFr 0.93. What a difference!

After these difficulties, I went on a camping trip with someone from back home, Hubert Preuss, who was by chance also in New York. Later he became the owner of a transport company that did business with us in Hemer and Lahr. I was delighted when his daughter Alexandra and her

WEATHER
Fair tonight, low 40 to 45. Sunday cloudy and warm with afternoon showers.
Temperatures Past 24 Hours
High 68 Low 32 Noon 60

THE MORGANTOWN POST

Go to Church Of Your Choice This Sunday
(See Listings on Page 3)

VOL. 93, NO. 89 MORGANTOWN, W. VA., SATURDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 14, 1956 12 PAGES TODAY PRICE FIVE CENTS

Post Photo

GERMAN MANUFACTURER VISITS STERLING FAUCET — Friedrich Grohe, center, of Hemer, Westphalia, Germany, eldest son of the owner of the largest brass goods manufacturing industry in Western Europe, is welcomed to Morgantown and to Sterling Faucet Co.'s local plant by John R. Hardesty, Sterling secretary, right, and Robert Cagey, left, vice president in charge of operations.

German Brass Expert Visits

Friedrich Grohe Is Pleased by Cordiality

Astonishment at cordiality of West Virginians, was expressed here yesterday by Friedrich Grohe, son of the owner of the largest brass goods manufacturing industry in Western Europe, who will be in Morgantown and Arthurdale about three weeks to study production methods of Sterling Faucet and its affiliated companies.

This is Mr. Grohe's first visit to the United States and he plans to spend about three months touring the brass industries of this nation. After leaving Here, he will travel to Colorado where he will visit a German friend, Klaus Neubner. The two of them will then visit plants in California.

During his stay in this area, Mr. Grohe is living at Arthurdale Inn as guest of J. W. Ruby, president of Sterling Faucet Co. In his studies of brass manufacuring operations here, he is being tutored by John R. Hardesty, Sterling Faucet secretary, who first met the visitor while in Germany on a similar work tour for his company.

Mr. Grohe said the major differences between the manufacturing processes of his company in Germany and the local industry lie in the rate of piece production and in the finished product.

He explained that in Western Europe, the faucet products turned out are much heavier than those here, and have a much fancier finish to them.

Germans feel that the heavier and fancier a product of this kind is, the better it is, he said.

The piece rate of production in the Grohe's plants is much slower than here at Sterling. Young Mr. Grohe hopes to take back the ideas which will help put "mass production" in high gear for his company.

His father's firm, "Friedrich Grohe, Armaturenfabrik," is in Hemer, Westphalia, Germany, and there is a big branch of the company in Johannesburg, South Africa Mr. Hardesty said there is a possibility that Serling Faucet and the Grohe firm may do business together in Soupth Africa in the future.

The German plants employ 600 persons, and Sterling an average of 1,200 persons.

Mr. Hardesty said that "practically every major hotel in Western Europe is equiped with Grohe Fixtures."

GERMAN

(Continued From P ge 1)

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Mr. Hardesty said that "practically every major hotel in Western Europe is equiped with Grohe Fixtures."

lovely children visited me in Rougemont not too long ago.

We went all the way down to Florida and across to Texas. The official camping sites were excellent, with showers, ice dispensers and even laundry-washing machines, which were quite new to us. Whenever we couldn't find a camping place, we would stay in an affordable motel. This meant $ 5 per room rather than the better places at $ 10. From Texas I travelled on to Colorado to see an old roommate, Klaus Neubner, who many years later visited me in Ojai, California when I had a place there.

I then went to visit other faucet companies, including Sloan Valves in Chicago; then on to Toronto and Montreal to see if we could sell our faucets there – we couldn't – and, initially, to research whether we should build a factory in Canada. In Stratford, the industrial commissioner took me to their Land Haus Club, where I met some friendly German industrialists, a relief and nice contrast to the Sterling Faucet fiasco. A hardware merchant in Stratford showed me around and told me that they got non-mixing faucets very cheaply from the US. It cost them only $ 1.80. Our price was DM 3, which would have been not even half that price. (While in Stratford I heard that somebody from Dahl was looking around. In the 1970s, Dahl was taken over by Grohe-ITT.)

Running Grohe Thermostat

In 1956, my father bought a thermostat manufacturing company in the Black Forest town of Lahr, 45 km east of Schiltach. This was Carl Nestler, which had a thermostat patent, something we didn't have. They were licensing it from Emil Burhop of Similor in Switzerland. I remember that Mr Burhop always drove a Rolls Royce … and very slowly. Regarding impatient drivers, he told us, "But I am afraid that I cannot tell them that I am not in a hurry." We renamed the Carl Nestler company Grohe Thermostat GmbH.

Grohe Thermostat was losing money until 1959, when my father put me in charge, the beginning of ten years as head of a company. I was 29, but well prepared for the job. I began lodging in a single room at Herr Zybon's in Lahr.

One of the first things I did was to add product images to our price lists. At the same time, I knew we could raise the prices, because most of the items made in Lahr were specialist products. In fact, I had transferred the production of these annoying small series from Hemer when I was working there, and then when I took over in Lahr I was confronted with them again. One was a *Sicherheitsmischbatterie* (safety mixer tap), and when the purchasers objected to the new price, I told them that we couldn't earn money from the product otherwise, which they understood. We were soon making a profit. This was partly because I was less arrogant than the previous managing director and had a better relationship with the staff. We also reorganized the factory workflow and the company accounting system.

Nevertheless, the existing factory was old and rundown and situated on several levels. Having worked in the planning of factories in Hemer, I knew how important it was to have good space and lots of it. So, from the commune, we immediately bought 30,000 m^2 of flat industrial land in Lahr-Dinglingen, not far from the original factory – for 95 pfennigs/m^2 – and built a larger, more modern factory on the site. This became the largest of the Grohe factories. We were aided in this by a loan from Hermann Graf zu Münster, one of our bankers, who believed in the company and in my optimism. Hans Junior visited and was impressed with the place.

Within three years, Grohe Thermostat had 900 employees, up from 100, bigger even than the parent company in Hemer, Grohe Armaturen, which had 800. Grohe Thermostat doubled

Inge and me at our wedding reception, 1961, with Inge's father, Kurt Praetsch, on the left; after Inge took her mother's side in her parents' marriage battle, he was kept from ever meeting our sons

the turnover of Grohe as a whole, and the company became almost four times larger than Hansgrohe. We claimed 45% of the German market, which we never again succeeded in doing.

Then, in 1960, Hans Junior died suddenly of a heart attack, in Alpirsbach, at age 65. This was a big shock. It also left my father to be made managing director of Hansgrohe while still managing Grohe Armaturen (the companies also shared marketing representatives). I cautioned my cousins against my father taking charge of their company, but they admired his success. One of our consultants declared that he could *aus dem Sattel schiessen* ('shoot out of the saddle', like a cowboy accurately firing a revolver while riding a galloping horse). "Al Capone was also successful," I warned, but to no avail. My father made a triumphant return to Schiltach. After a few years, he built a fantastic house on the Häberlesberg, a hill above the town.

A New Family Begins

Inge and I married in 1961. I needed to be in Lahr during the week, but focusing on the good idea to have the Lahr and Hemer companies cooperating meant that I could spend every weekend in Hemer. As Inge's other family and friends were in Hemer, we moved into my parents' house there; they were elsewhere at that time.

Not long afterwards, Inge informed me that I was not the right man for her. Perhaps it was my lack of interest in going out to dance, drink and have that kind of fun. I was too tired after working to stay out past midnight. But she also wanted children, and I thought that that might be the answer. One year later our first child, Christoph, was born, in Dortmund, where our doctors were based. It was heart-breaking on Mondays to say goodbye to him, as he looked

On my way home to Ottenheim from the new factory in Lahr, 1963

quite lost in his cradle. It was fashionable at the time for there to be some distance between parents and their infants. Soon Inge and Christoph joined me in a newly rented house in Ottenheim, 12 km northwest of Lahr.

Once, when Christoph had just mastered crawling, we were visiting my grandparents' place in La Vallée de Joux. Something fell under a table, and he went for it at top speed. Marguerite announced, *"Il a de la suite dans les idées!"* ("He has strong intentions!")

Heading Both Companies

By 1962, responsibility for Hansgrohe and Grohe Armaturen had become too much for my father. He stayed on at the smaller Hansgrohe and 'retired' from running Grohe Armaturen. He, my mother and Charles, plus his secretary, moved to Baden-Baden, a spa town 80 km north of Schiltach. Charles recently wrote that in the years afterwards I would meet him at their new house and take him in my "lovely Jaguar" (I'd given up motorbikes due to increasingly dangerous traffic; my father once commented that I was always respectful of motorcyclists in traffic) "to go on walking tours. At the end of these tours, we would go to the rustic restaurant of Burg Windeck … Those were some of the greatest moments I had during my years in Baden-Baden." I was pleased yet a little surprised to hear this, as our father especially loved Charles, his last child, and spoiled him a lot.

As a consequence of his stepping back, my father put me in charge of Grohe Armaturen in Hemer, in addition to Grohe Thermostat in Lahr – a total of 2,000 employees. This meant the doubling of my responsibilities and workload, plus the added task of bringing the two administrations together. With some pressure, plus help from our company tax consultant, Herr Braune, I could double my salary from DM 5,000 to DM 10,000 per month. But my father found this hard to stomach, and I had the feeling that it was the beginning of the end of our relationship.

Working with a management consultancy firm, Kienbaum, we organized and built a new administration centre in Hemer, where our main administrators for the company were already based. We also bought an old factory in Menden (which, later, was sold to a Grohe Armaturen employee for producing seatbelts). I would have preferred to stay in Lahr, where our small family was now settled, and which enjoyed a better climate and environment. But Inge, Christoph and I ended up moving back into the Bemberg house in Hemer. John, our second child, was born in Hagen, a larger town west of Hemer, in 1965.

Charles and me, mid-1960s

By this time, Bernd was working in the company. Unfortunately, he and the new technical director I had hired didn't see eye to eye, and I struggled to keep the situation in balance. Later, Bernd was put in charge of the English market for thermostats.

Meanwhile, my father was making some decisions as head of Hansgrohe that could be interpreted as benefitting Grohe. And as might

Me giving a speech during the 1965 inauguration of the new administration building in Hemer, with the architect and a town official in front, the union representatives behind

have been expected, his stepping back from Grohe didn't go according to plan. We needed to increase our management team because development, production, sales and administrative work kept increasing. Then two of our central figures, our innovative head of sales and our excellent technical manager, died. But contrary to logic, my father wanted to avoid hiring new directors – each would need a secretary and entail other costs! He got this attitude from his father, I'm sure. Another difficulty was that experts in the water-fittings industry were hard to find, as we were already the biggest company in the field and had hired so many. We also trained many people.

Essentially, my father was worried by our speed of growth and change. He wanted to turn back time. He declared during a meeting, "We are like a bobsled team: the most important man on a bobsled team is the brakeman. I am the brakeman!" Nevertheless, we hired two engineers, and he declared his objection to "this mass hiring". No wonder we always had to rely on other people's inventions, like the single-handed mixing faucet of Alfred Moen or the thermostatic mixing valve of Emil Burhop. Later, I heard that one of the companies that eventually took over Grohe had gone on to hire 100 engineers.

Vienna

My father also believed I had become too powerful in the company. I thought I had to be powerful to succeed. There was increasing tension between us. Herr Braune, who had become an excellent adviser to us, including regarding family problems, stated, "It's about power and money." My father was even insisting that there be *"die totale Unterwerfung"* ("total submission") to him. There were eruptions of hatefulness and rage between us. Herr Braune later agreed with me: a man can easily say things he regrets.

One such heated occasion arose like this: During my last three years as manager, we had an annual turnover of DM 100 million, 25 % of which was profit. We invested DM 10 million of the profit into the company and DM 15 million went to taxes. The family owners didn't receive anything. However, earlier we had accumulated around DM 250,000 per owner, so Herr Braune drew up a contract, which my father signed, saying that he would pay this money out. He didn't. Fräulein Bouvain then confirmed that, as managing director, I could authorise paying out my portion to myself, which I did.

It was 1965, and this was a scandal. Herr Braune barely managed to stop my father from firing me. One of the directors then asked what, in this case, was my position. My father declared that I was his legitimate successor. One had to wonder if he was still in his right mind. He must have been thinking it over, however, because he soon returned from Baden-Baden permanently and, as punishment, transferred me to Vienna, "never to return", to take over a newly acquired, rundown factory there. He claimed the whole management team was supportive of the Vienna purchase. In turn, they told me they had, in fact, been against it.

I am still in contact with Herr Braune's daughter Maike, who held a senior position in the field of education and is interested in Krishnamurti. She has told me that her father was always very fond of me, which I hadn't realized, and that he had introduced his family to my book *The Beauty of the Mountain* – memories of J. Krishnamurti.

I had worked enthusiastically and my identity, probably since childhood, was tied up with the existing factories. The Schiltach factory had been a part of my playground. The noises, smells, surroundings were second nature to me. The sense of injustice and meanness at being removed from Hemer and Lahr was difficult for me. There used to be a radio programme that always began: *"Il suffirait de si peu de chose : un peu de raison et d'amour"* ("It would take so little: a little reason and love"). I felt compelled to ask my father, "Where is love here?" In the end, Inge, the boys and I moved to Vienna – even though my father, presumably backed by my mother, had suggested to Inge that she and the children could stay and move in with them!

In Vienna, with the help of a good team, I took on the shabby factory, situated across the ground floors of three apartment buildings. Within three years we were making a profit.

And, once again, my father was running the Hemer and Lahr companies, now much enlarged, plus the old factory in Menden. He was under enormous pressure, and it was too much for him. There was some irrationality and, I thought, signs of paranoia especially regarding money. For example, through Herr Braune an excellent manager had been found who could have replaced me when I went to Vienna. This would have reduced my father's added work stress enormously. But he refused to offer an acceptable salary, and the opportunity was lost. Instead, Prof Neumann, a lecturer in Economics and a balanced and stable assistant to my father, stepped in and, essentially, began running the companies.

At first, our small family lived on Mariahilfer Strasse in the middle of the city. But during a weekend family trip to the countryside, John saw a chicken and asked, "What is that?" I was shocked to realize we were so cut off from nature. So, we moved to a nice house on a steep hill in Perchtoldsdorf, an area southwest of the centre near beautiful woodland and parks of large old trees, lakes, gardens and a wildlife preserve. Later, the famous Viennese painter and singer Arik Brauer, who had become a friend, came to visit us with his wife and two daughters. Afterwards, he told me the girls were wanting to go back to "the house where it is always up or down".

Christoph began attending a French school. He didn't like it at all at first but, as children do, he learned the language quickly. This proved to be good preparation for when, four years later, we moved to the French-speaking part of Switzerland. John began learning the language later, once we were in Switzerland, when he

first started kindergarten. After two weeks of not saying a word, suddenly he began speaking French!

A nice memory: I was never fond of screen entertainment, and never had a television. But not long after the animated musical film *Yellow Submarine* came out in 1968–1969, Inge and I took Christoph and John to see it. It's a classic, full of songs by the Beatles. In this film there's a scene in which a character is vacuuming a room with a big pipe. The pipe catches the character's tail, and the character explodes with a big BRUUUHM noise. Back home, I had to sing this part to our sons over and over and over again and act out the big BRUUUHM! that they loved so much.

1966, on Sylt in the North Sea; one of my first headstands in nature, with Inge standing and Christoph in the playpen behind. Once I even did a headstand during a flight, and was surprised at how much could be felt of the up and down motion of the plane.

I think life became a bit better for Inge during our time in Vienna. I started collecting art, which meant we began meeting interesting artists. There was a group of *Phantastischer Realismus* painters in Vienna – Arik Brauer, Hundertwasser, Hausner, Hutter, Lehmden and Fuchs – whom we got to know. I wasn't taken by abstract art at all, and this group were painting figuratively, in layers upon layers of colour. I gathered a rather impressive set of paintings, plus a few sculptures, and even a sketch by Klimt and one by Schiele. Later, in Switzerland, I also collected some surrealistic art, *Art Brut*/outsider art, and naïve art.

Vienna was also where I nearly stopped drinking. The outskirts of the city are famous for a kind of outdoor tavern (a *Heuriger*) serving fresh, local wine that is far too easy to drink. I came to realize that such drinking prevented me from thinking clearly. Some years later I took it up again, in Davos in the form of cocktails that I also mixed for friends. That time I stopped, and for good, because it made my knees weak for the next day's skiing – a real deterrent.

To counter the stress of all the changes related to the move to Vienna, I began attending a yoga school. The teacher was an incredibly flexible 80-year-old who disapproved of ballet. (Woe to anyone from the ballet world who joined the class.) We would start with exercises, then do an hour of yoga, then a piano teacher would play classical music while we danced. It was at this school that I began doing headstands. Almost two decades later, Krishnamurti taught me some yoga, breathing and eye exercises, and he corrected my headstand.

The Sale

My father's reaction to an increasingly stressful time running the companies back in Germany was to sell a majority of Grohe to a large corporation, hoping to clear his workload yet remain at least somewhat in charge of the new management. In 1968 he chose the US company

ITT, International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation. That same year ITT also purchased the hotel chain Sheraton.

Strangely – although perhaps not, as it would save money – my father used ITT's lawyer as his own representation in the sale, something that shouldn't have been allowed. The 51 % stake was, in fact, the 10 % each belonging to my mother, myself, Yvonne, Bernd and Charles. My mother and siblings were dependent on our father, so couldn't resist the sale. However, I could try to stand up to him. Based on professional advice, I declared my wish not to have my part sold. But he threatened me with a lawsuit, claiming that such a thing would be against the family's interest. Family was always very important to him, in his particular way. I called it the 'holy' family. In any event, the sale meant that the four children and our mother each had 10 % of the value in cash, with our father keeping his 49 % share of the company. The sale also meant that our little family's time in Vienna was over.

ITT paid themselves an enormous amount for consulting work. My father opposed this and sued them, and won. In time, they fired him. They also fired his secretary, Fräulein Bouvain, as she had been giving him information he wasn't due to receive. And earlier they had fired Bernd. Prof Neumann told me that ITT at the beginning had asked my father what they should do with his sons. He'd replied, "Fire them."

In fact, ITT offered me a position as assistant to the CEO of Tewes, their car brake manufacturing division near Frankfurt. But I didn't want to be an assistant, and Frankfurt was very polluted. I was glad to be moving to Switzerland.

Through all this, our father had kept his 26 % stake in Hansgrohe. He hadn't, however, informed the family-owners of Hansgrohe about the Grohe sale, and the two companies had been working together closely by that point. Eventually the Hansgrohe board removed him as managing director, and he sued them for not immediately crediting his account with the total final profit payment he was, at some point, due. He lost the case, as the company had clear regulations regarding how and when profits could be distributed.

ITT managed the company badly. One year, they even made a loss, the first loss in Grohe's history. This scandalized my father.

In his life, my father was fired three times: from Hansgrohe by his father, from Grohe by ITT, and again from Hansgrohe by his cousins. He became bitter and was never again happy with the evolution of the companies. He had been a forceful, charismatic personality with admiring and loyal employees who

Echandens, 1969: John, the painter and singer Arik Brauer, and Christoph

John in front of the house in Echandens, 1969

worked hard for little money. Even with the disruptions of the 1960s, Grohe was establishing European subsidiaries: in France in 1961 (I travelled in the demonstration van), Austria in 1965 and Italy in 1967. (Later: in the Netherlands in 1973, Britain and Spain in 1978, Belgium in 1979. The first US subsidiary was founded in 1975 and incorporated in 1976 as Grohe America, Inc.)

In the 1970s, the German government was pushing for and financing the relocation of old factories from town centres. The Hemer factory was completely taken down. Not even a small part was kept as a museum, which would have been culturally interesting.

My mother's parents' house at 4–6 Chez Villard in l'Orient, as it is now

Moving to Switzerland

In 1969, our branch of the family began moving to Vaud in Switzerland. Our father humorously called us 'tax refugees'. He and our mother moved to her parents' house in the village of l'Orient in La Vallée de Joux, but they kept the house in Schiltach. They would go there often and would occasionally visit South Africa: 'the travelling circus', as my father called it. The same could be said for me, as I moved often in my life, and only stopped travelling in my 90s.

Vaud is a marvellous region on Lake Geneva that includes parts of the Alps and the Jura. It was my mother's place of birth and that of her parents. The land was very familiar to me and always struck me as an ideal place to make a home. For the first few months, Inge, Christoph, John and I stayed in a hotel in Morges. Then we bought a house near Lausanne – on Chemin du Grand-Pré in Echandens – where we settled and where the boys went to school.

Two funny memories of John from the early 1970s: He was around 6 when, believing Inge had become too tough on him, he raised his arms like a beggar and dramatically pleaded, "Pitié! Pitié!" A few years later, a neighbour lady declared, "The girls will be after him!" John's reply? "Already now."

We also bought Villa Loveno, Route de Chanivas 13 in Buchillon, on Lake Geneva, where we went for the weekends. It was good for our sons to grow up in Vaud, and they live there still, with their own families nearby.

Soon I took Grandfather Arthur to see Buchillon. It was a warm day and he sat under a tree above the lake, looking out on the lake in quiet pleasure.

I was glad to be off the treadmill and lucky not to have to work any longer. I could now spend most of my time in nature. With my eyes set toward mountains, we bought an apartment

Inge and Christoph in Morocco, mid-1970s

in Davos (in Haus Floribelle, Parkareal) as a base for what I hoped would be many climbs and mountain ski tours, and for our small family to enjoy. I ended up climbing for 10 years and ski touring intensely for 40 years. (Once, Christoph and I were ski touring up a piste when a young girl skied towards us with her mother. Convinced we had no money for the ski lift, she stopped, pointed and declared, "They are the poorest of the poor!") I even took advanced ski lessons in the French Alps to improve my slalom turning. The instructor announced, "There is one who turns easily in the deep snow – that's Fried*risch*." From my 40s on I no longer used ski lifts, preferring to ski tour up the mountains. It was glorious to walk up and ski down in deep, untouched snow. This came to an end at age 80 when I went blind in one eye, which interfered with detecting bumps in the terrain at high speed.

I also supported Inge to study in Paris, bought her a nice car, and both of us were happy that she had lots of freedom. She travelled to India with a friend of ours from Vienna, Pravin Cherkoori, who had an Indian silk shop in the city. When Inge wanted to open her own Indian silk shop in Lausanne, I financed it, and it worked well. Occasionally I imagined I could get involved in business again, and I invested in several other small enterprises. But I'd become too disenchanted with that world, and these new enterprises had to be sold at a loss. Graf zu Münster recommended expanding Inge's shop into Gstaad. Gstaad is seasonal, however, and that shop too had to close.

In Echandens, 1971, with one of our first Mercedes-Benz cabriolets (a late 1960s 250 SL automatic)

In 1974 in Romainmôtier, a medieval village and national heritage site 8 km southwest of Orbe, I hosted an exhibition of the Viennese paintings I'd collected,

In my home office in Echandens, *1970s, with mostly Brauer paintings behind me and some by Fuchs in the background*

plus a rather impressive meal. Most of the painters themselves were there at La Maison du Prieur, as were my whole family and many friends, including my mountain guide Andreas. Afterwards, my father declared, "Now that was a festival!" Five years later we did it all again, perhaps even more so, for my 50th birthday. Ultimately, once I realized that it makes no sense to collect things, I sold most of the art. I had, however, very much enjoyed supporting our artist friends.

A 1976 book cataloguing the fantastic-realism paintings I had bought from artist friends in Vienna; cover painting by Ernst Fuchs

Company Changes

Meanwhile, the Hansgrohe family board was growing. There were now Lenchen's husband, Heinz Mathauer Senior, from Vienna; Lieschen's children, Elisabeth (Michelotti) and Gertrud (Hellfritz); Hans Junior's wife, Tilde,

Richard, Philippe, Pierre-Nicolas and Jan Nikolas around their father, Klaus, seated

and their children, Anita (Chini), Isabella (Diem), Rita (Frey), Roswitha (Rosi Steurer), Johannes and Dieter; my father; and Klaus, who began working at the company in 1968. All had some sort of say in the business. In 1975, Heinz Mathauer was made Hansgrohe's managing director. When he resigned two years later, Klaus became managing director and very much helped to modernize the business, including with some emphasis on sustainability.

By the late 1970s, Hansgrohe and Grohe were arguing over the use of the Grohe name, and we had to use Friedrich Grohe for a time (see pg. 32). Eventually, we were able to use Grohe on its own, and our new competitor, which by this time was also making faucets, would use Hansgrohe. With his sons, Richard, Philippe, Pierre-Nicolas and Jan Nikolas, Klaus helped Hansgrohe to evolve into one of the most widely known and respected water-fittings companies in the world. And they manufacture only in Germany.

Some Grohe manufacturing remains in Germany, but once our family was no longer involved, much of it was transferred to Portugal and Thailand. The high quality remains, but it is a shame to see the Lahr factory, for example, which once employed 1,600 people, currently having just a few hundred workers. It had been a great example of how to work brass, and now it produces plastic showers.

THE CLIMBING YEARS

200 Mountains

In 1970, at the Davos mountaineering school, I met Andreas Scherrer. A few years earlier, at 21, he'd become the youngest mountain guide in Switzerland. At first, we did a few climbs organized by the school. But as I was often the only client, I started hiring Andreas as my personal mountain guide. Over the next five years we climbed 200 peaks everywhere in the European Alps – including some of the 4,000 m ones, notably the Matterhorn *(Mont Cervin)* via the difficult Zmuttgrat (Zmutt Ridge) – and became good friends. For most of these climbs we would ski tour up to the point where ropes, ice axes and boots with crampons were needed. Ski touring itself is quite demanding. We would go for a one-week mountain tour every month, all seasons, often staying in mountain huts along the way.

It was also in 1970, 20 years after that exhausting trip back from South Africa, that I started flying again. It was from Corsica, in one of the first French Caravels, a jet very different from the propeller planes I'd been used to. This was after a climbing trip with Andreas. The previous night we'd slept in a tent surrounded by wild boars, and we hadn't placed enough straw underneath, so it was extremely uncomfortable. In the morning it felt as if something had got displaced in one of my shoulders. Every movement was painful. The prospect of riding in Andreas's car to the ferry, taking the ferry across the Mediterranean, and continuing by car to Geneva was unbearable. I decided that I didn't mind if I died: I would give flying another chance.

The flight was smooth, fortunately, with a spectacular view over the Mediterranean. From then on, I flew whenever I could, even the short distance from Zurich to Geneva; by today's standards, hardly ecological. The views of the Alps on this flight were fantastic, and one day I paid for Andreas to experience it. He was delighted to see, from high up, the mountains he loved so much and knew so well.

When we were about to climb the 4,478 m Matterhorn, we first acclimatized to the higher altitudes for a week. Andreas would say that over 3,000 m, people don't like each other anymore. There's less oxygen the higher one goes, and often an increasing sense of unease, dizziness and headaches. For climbing such a high mountain, we went earlier in the year than usual, in June. This meant a lot of ice on the path,

Andreas Scherrer, my mountain guide and friend, on Schijenzahn, early 1970s

In front of the Matterhorn, which Andreas and I climbed in 1973 via the Zmuttgrat

and that we would need to be attached to each other the whole way up. It also meant that the climb would take twice as long as normal, because only one of us at a time could advance; one climber would continue while the other secured him by tying our rope around a rock. Nobody can hold a body in free-fall.

The night before the climb, we stayed in the Hörnlihütte (at 3,260 m), the main shelter for climbers attempting the Matterhorn. The first thing we heard on arrival was the tragic news that a man from Japan had fallen and died. There tend to be many rescue helicopters in the air around Zermatt, and soon one came to remove his body from the eastern side of the glacier.

There was strong wind that day. Clouds were clinging to the ridge. Andreas was worried that if the clouds came over the ridge it would be hard for us to find the path. There are no signs up there, a situation that intentionally makes the services of mountain guides essential.

We began at 3 o'clock the next morning, each carrying a lantern. (When many climbers ascend at the same time, their snaking candle-lit line is spectacular.) Andreas had wanted to start at 2 o'clock, but I refused. He had a reason, though: to get to the Zmuttgrat we needed to pass under the Hörnligrat – a ridge with unstable rocks and the main route to the top of the Matterhorn. Andreas was concerned that earlier climbers might cause rocks to fall on us. As it turned out, there were falling rocks, whistling on their way down, but we weren't hit.

In the early morning fog, before we started climbing, we saw some ghostly ropes hanging down from the north side. Andreas said they were from climbers who had fallen down that very steep face. The Matterhorn is so famous that people attempt it without proper training. In the high season there can be up to 100 people per day climbing up.

The route over the Zmuttgrat was tricky. Andreas claimed it was as difficult as the Matterhorn's north face. In German we call the most difficult part of a climb the *Schlüsselstelle*, the key point. I don't know how I made it, but it helped that Andreas pulled me strongly from the other side. At the top, I was amazed how little space there was. The view was breathtaking, but in fact views tend to be better further down where one isn't on top of absolutely everything.

Half-way through our descent, over the Hörnligrat, we passed the Solvay Bivouac, a refuge from extreme weather. We noticed that a man was staying there illegally. Andreas then told me a horror story about Solvay. Two men had been climbing up that way, and one of them arrived first. Before he could remove the ropes attached to him, the other man fell and dragged the first man out of the hut and down to his death. There are many such climbing stories. A less tragic one, not about the Matterhorn: When walking over a glacier, a man fell into a crevasse. A rescue team came for him … but hauled the

'wrong' person out! The team had to return for the man who had called for help.

More stories: Once Andreas and I had to cross a slope of loose rocks. He was above me on the slope. Suddenly a rock I was holding onto broke away, and I fell backwards. If Andreas hadn't been able to catch me, I would have fallen all the way down. Once when we were coming back from the Mont Blanc, we just missed an ice avalanche, which is even worse than a snow avalanche. If we had passed a few minutes later, it would have caught us. Another time, I was climbing the Schiahorn, above Davos, on my own when I came across an ibex, which is a beautiful and strong animal. This one wasn't afraid of me. I lifted a stone to toss towards him to see if he would move. He moved an inch, then rose on his hind legs as if to fight. I returned the way I'd come! Something similar happened to me above Rougemont, on a small mountain path on the way to the Gummfluh. And another time, south of Engadin, we heard something that sounded like rocks tumbling down, but this wouldn't have been possible in that area. When we looked down we saw two ibexes fighting, impressively clashing their horns together.

Andreas and I twice climbed the 3,173 m Tinzenhorn. Sitting spectacularly at the end of the Davoser Valley, it resembles the Matterhorn. We found some aluminium parts there from a downed American bomber. The sound of falling rocks made me wonder whether a propeller plane was flying nearby.

Another high mountain we climbed twice was the 4,314 m Grand Combin. After our second climb, Andreas declared "Never again." One has to pass under the glacier where loosened blocks of ice threaten, and not long beforehand, six climbers had been killed in an icefall there.

Straight after the Matterhorn climb, I went with Bernd and Charles and Bernd's wife Gaby to the Bahamas. We flew economy, and it happened to be the only trip that we ever took together. It was amazingly beautiful, especially the crystal clear blue water over white sand. But it was *hot*. As we walked off the plane, and with my having come directly from the Alps, I couldn't believe the heat and thought, "It cannot always be like this." Yet it was, even during the tropical rainstorm that immediately developed and which soaked our luggage. So we spent most of the holiday in the sea or in our air-conditioned apartment.

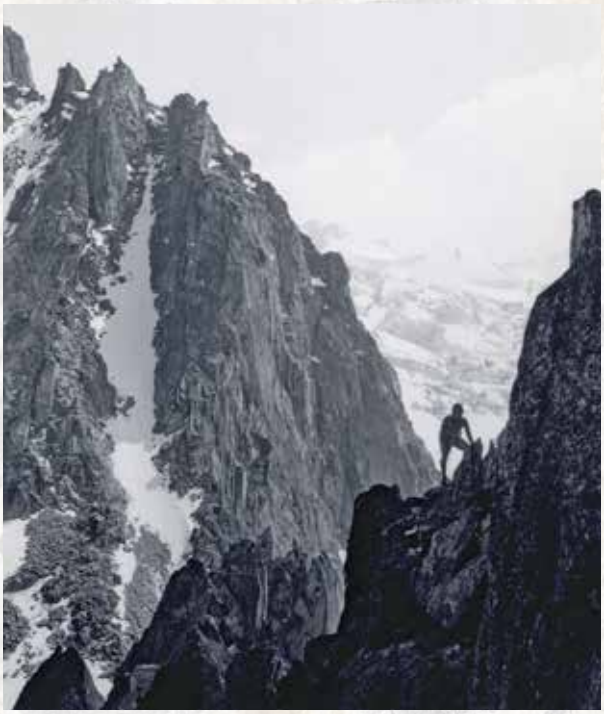
Tricky river-crossing in St Antönien while ski touring with Andreas. I had a beard for eight years during this period. In the beginning Andreas said I looked wild. I shaved it off when it started going grey, and my father claimed the new change made me look 10 years younger.

One day we went out on a fishing boat, and another guest on the boat caught a huge grouper fish. Bernd still has a photo of it, and we ate the fish that evening in a nearby restaurant. Afterwards I walked back alone, in the dark. Suddenly there was a huge pack of dogs – *dogs everywhere*. The leaders rose up and placed their front paws against my chest, sniffing. God thanks they weren't barking or growling. In fact it was eerie how quiet they were. I was frozen in panic. Eventually they left me alone. Perhaps they were

being their version of friendly, or maybe they just liked knowing what people were eating for dinner!

The Sulzhütte

On a rainy day in 1974, while hiking above Partnun (near St Antönien in Graubünden, close to the Austrian border), we happened upon a dilapidated one-room shepherd's hut. It was at 2,130 m, right at the foot of the Sulzfluh mountain. No longer in use, it had a large hole in the floor made by marmots, and only one window. Andreas had the idea that I could rent it from the *Alpgemeinschaft*, an association of farmers whose cows spend the summers up there. He organized the agreement for the Sulzhütte, such that if we would renovate it and allow a shepherd to stay there for two weeks every year, we could have it for a reasonable rent. So we gave the place a new floor, roof and chimney, and added windows – though not a toilet, and there was no running water nearby nor electricity. Once I stayed there at the same time as the shepherd. He carried lots of water up from Partnun, which would have been very heavy, especially over that distance. Mostly Andreas and I used a metal milk canister to bring water from a fountain about 30 minutes' walk away; carried on one's back, it too could be heavy.



Climbing near the Schijenfluh, June 1973

On a climbing tour in front of the Schijenfluh, where a rock loosened as I held to it; I could move my leg just in time to let it thunder down the valley. Andreas laughed and shouted, "Hallo Friedrich, let the mountain stand!"

We liked the Sulzhütte very much. It is in the most amazing landscape of majestic mountains with sheer cliffs, and huge light-grey shards of rock rising from green-grass hills. On the other side of the valley from the hut, one can see the Schijenzahn, which overhangs somewhat. The first time Andreas announced that we would climb it, I refused. By the second time, I was

The wonderful Sulzhütte

Me in front of the Sulzhütte, our mountain retreat, maybe 1976 or 1977

Andreas carrying materials for the Sulzhütte

Christoph and John at the Sulzhütte, preparing wood for burning

used to the idea and could do it. At the top, he attached me to a rock that I didn't quite trust. "Oh, if this rock comes down!" I worried. Not much later, Andreas told me, "The rock came down."

In spring and summer there are flowers, butterflies, birds (sometimes even white-tailed ptarmigan and black grouse), deer and of course marmots and, in summer, cows. Even though small airplanes can sometimes be heard, usually the only sounds are the wind and the call of the birds. There is great solitude and quiet in the land.

We stayed at the Sulzhütte several times as a base for our monthly hiking, climbing or high-mountain ski touring. And I ended up renting the place and staying there, sometimes several times per year, either alone or with family and friends, for 43 years. The hut's guestbooks are full of the drawings and observations of family and friends. Christoph, John and I often went to the Sulzhütte together when they were young. We even spent Christmas there four times in the 1970s – you can imagine the snow. They also had some ski lessons with Andreas, which they enjoyed very much. Although I'm no longer able to go there, Christoph and John continue to have holidays there, which makes me happy. Andreas' brothers Ernst and Christian helped a lot with improvements over the years, and they make sure to keep it clean and organized. There is even a toilet now, and a fountain just a few minutes' walk away. Ernst spent lots of time there with his children, and they all became keen mountain climbers.

Arik Brauer, the painter and also singer who received two golden record certificates for his own songs, joined Andreas and me for several of our tours around Davos, including climbs of the Mönch, Jungfrau and one of the Silvretta peaks near Klosters. He was a great, wild mountain man and skier. He always skied too fast; we

View of the Schijenzahn which, at first, I refused to climb

The Sulzhütte in January 1980

A crowded ridge on the way up the Mönch, with Arik Brauer, a friend of his, and me (photo by Andreas)

were afraid he would break some bones. This never happened, thankfully, but one time on the Silvretta we got caught in the early stages of a huge thunderstorm. Arik's ice axe began humming like a dynamo and his hair stood up all over his head, giving off sparks! He found it funny. Another time, early morning, he, Andreas and I had to climb down a long icy ladder leading to the Aletsch Glacier. We had crampons on and carried ropes and ice axes. At the bottom, Arik gleefully announced that we were "Armed to the teeth! One can see that this is a matter of life or death!"

One time, coming down from a high-mountain tour, Andreas and I skied farther than usual, all the way back into Kublis, even skiing through someone's garden. Suddenly I fell over an unseen wall, landing head-first at the bottom. Andreas joked that I looked "*ungespitzt in die Erde fahren*" (planted in the ground, but not sharp enough to really go in).

The Mönch is within a famous group of Swiss mountains – the Eiger (3,970 m), Mönch (4,099 m) and Jungfrau (4,158 m). The Eiger North Face is the most famous of the climbs, but Andreas believed it isn't technically very difficult, just dangerous due to the risk of falling rocks and ice. Early climbs of the North Face took mountaineers a week to complete. Once a whole group died attempting it. Nowadays, even single climbers can accomplish it in just a few hours: better gear is available, along with far more knowledge regarding the best approaches to take.

The route to the top of the Mönch includes a long ridge with steep cliffs on both sides. This ridge is so narrow that climbers have to proceed single-file. Seeing someone coming from the other side, I wondered what we would do. The solution was quite straightforward, as many good solutions are. When we met up, he bent down low, and we climbed over him.

The week before, on that same ridge, a group of six people from Austria died. One of them fell and took the other five with him. The last person jumped to the other side, which is the right thing to do, but the rope wasn't robust enough to support everyone, and it snapped. This was an awful tragedy, and unfortunately it wasn't the first time something like that had happened.

At the foot of Eiger North Face is a hotel well known as a climbing base. At one point I wanted to stay there for a night but had heard it was a little rundown. So, I called the hotel and asked, "How many stars do you have?" The manager replied, "Sir, when there are no clouds, we have innumerable stars!"

Andreas felt that Inge didn't understand what we were doing in the mountains. What I found fascinating about it is being alone in nature. Even on a rope tied to someone else, one spends lots of time alone.

Andreas had other clients, not only me, and he would sometimes go on his own, or with his

At the top of the Mönch, early 1970s

Andreas on the way up the slightly overhanging Schijenzahn, with me soon to follow – early 1970s

Looking up at the Schijenzahn before beginning the climb, early 1970s

Climbing, with high mountains in the background

brothers if it was an especially difficult climb, for example in the Caucasus or in Patagonia. He told me that he had been the first person to climb one of the routes in the Dolomites; when he returned to the base village, an orchestra was waiting for him. They played joyfully and gave him a celebratory reception.

The last tour we did together was from the Sulzhütte. I remember him telling me that he had a dangerous job. (After he died, his family discovered that he had prepared his testament.) I, too, was growing wary of these adventures.

A Tragic Accident

Tragically, Andreas died in 1975, at age 27, in a mountaineering accident. I had been booked to go with him that week, but called to say I was sorry, I had changed my plans. He said, "It's okay, I know what to do." He died on Piz Kesch while guiding another client. We had climbed the same mountain together many times, including the north face, which in fact isn't very difficult. Andreas had wanted to take me to an ice couloir (a narrow vertical chute) on Piz Kesch, but we never got around to it. He ended up taking this other client, and no one knows exactly what happened. Probably the client was anxious. Perhaps he sat down and began sliding towards the glacier, taking Andreas with him. Maybe ice screws weren't used. Andreas fell to the glacier, and the client, almost frozen on the glacier, survived.

I've always wondered what would have happened if I had gone with Andreas. Word of his death reached me while I was on a ship to New York, from where I had planned to take a ship to Haiti. On arriving in New York, I immediately flew back to Switzerland for the funeral. It was a sorrowful but impressive long walk with family and friends through the village from his parents' house to the church. Inge said she had never seen so many young women crying. Afterwards, a postcard from a tour to the Ortler arrived from Andreas, posted to me a few days before his death.

After this horrific accident, I continued mountaineering but not as intensely as before. I went on tours on my own, particularly in Valais/Wallis. I hired other mountain guides from Davos, like Roman Guidon. Andreas and I had done some apprentice tours with him. Andreas had also taken Rudi Käser on an apprentice tour. I went with Rudi, his wife, Erika, and Toni Betschart (from Davos) on several mountain tours. With Toni, on a few peaks around Davos, we even set up some mountain guest books. Christoph joined us. Through another mountaineering school I climbed the highest mountain in Morocco, the Toubkal (4,167 m) in the High Atlas range – on the top there were extraordinarily high winds – plus other important peaks. I also hiked in Nepal, and rode an elephant. Eventually, I switched to taking long hikes, which for years and years I could do with a variety of family and friends, and quite often I went on my own.

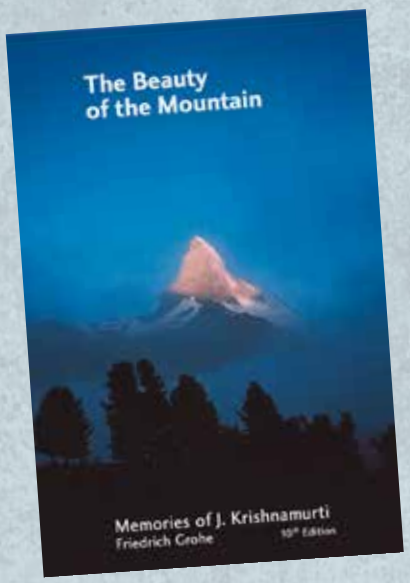
THE BEAUTY OF THE MOUNTAIN YEARS

Wondering about Life

It was in the early 1980s, in my 50s, that I began seriously wondering what life is about. Fortunately, my friend and exercise trainer Heide Scholz introduced me to the work of the philosopher and educator J. Krishnamurti. Since 1983, I've been involved in the schools, foundations and study centres he founded. What he was talking about is as fascinating to me today as it was on my first day of reading him. And my few years of getting to know him feel like a life story on their own.

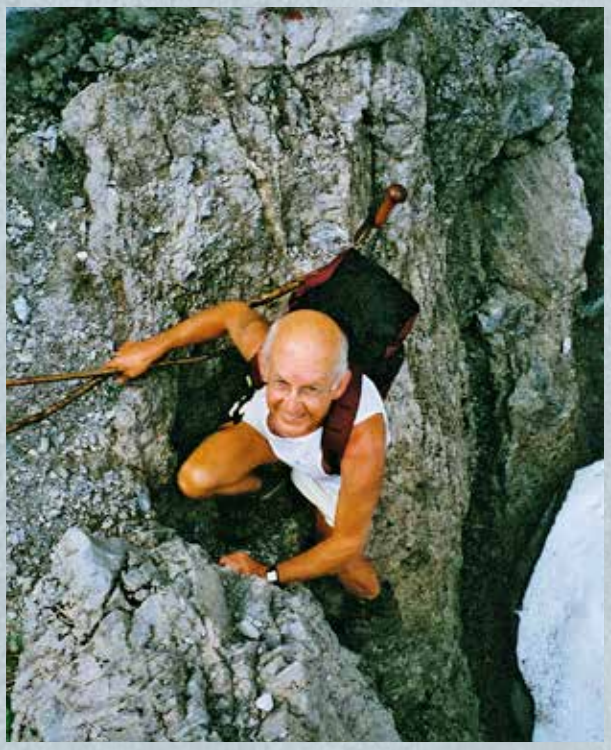
Recollections of that time can be found in *The Beauty of the Mountain* – memories of J. Krishnamurti. I took the book's cover picture of the Matterhorn from the old Hotel Riffelalp, at 2,222 m. (More about climbing the Matterhorn on pp. 45–46.) What isn't in the book is that Krishnamurti had advised generally that if one is going to write it's good to bring oneself into it, as that makes it interesting.

In his book *Krishnamurti in America*, David Edmund Moody, a friend, writes that "the two men ... shared an intuitive bond of mutual affection and trust. His many quotations [in *The Beauty of the Mountain*] of Krishnamurti's comments have the ring of authenticity; they aptly convey the perceptive and graceful manner in which Krishnamurti moved through ordinary events of daily life. Grohe was an avid and talented nature photographer, and his book is richly illustrated



With Krishnamurti at Rishi Valley, India, end 1984 or beginning 1985 (photo by Rita Zampese)

My mother and me on a cross-country ski tour in La Vallée de Joux, probably 1978; the 30-year-old pullover I'm wearing was knitted by my grandmother



Climbing up from Quocair on Videmanette in Rougemont (with Michael Krohnen, who took the photo), early 1990s

with scenes from many locations, including Ojai and Brockwood Park. Krishnamurti said that he and Grohe were brothers."

Change, All Is Change

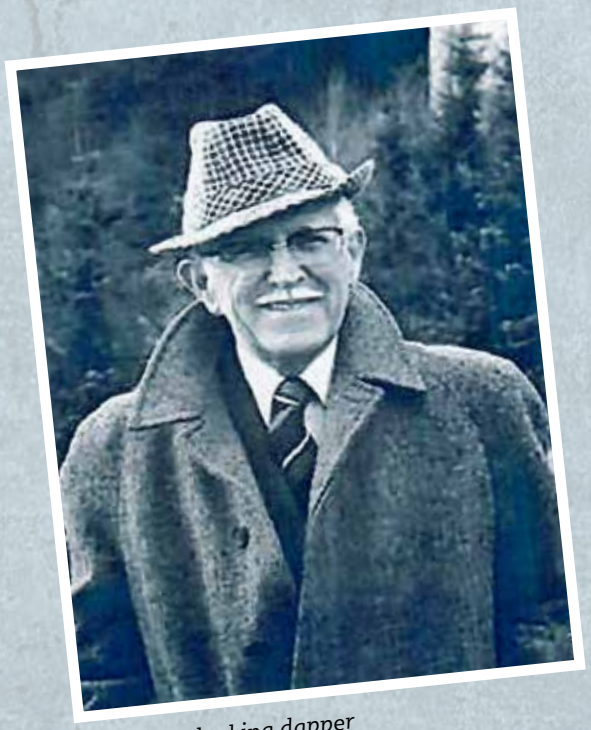
None of the attempts that Inge and I made to live separate lives solved our problems, and we divorced in the mid-1980s. I gave her the Davos apartment. Later, I bought it back from her, though she maintains I simply took it. Both of us remarried not long afterwards.

Yvonne had married André Rochat. In the early 1980s, Yvonne's father-in-law, Dr Rochat, a well-known general practitioner, diagnosed my father with high blood pressure. He recommended that he relax more, yet my father continued to fret about the companies, and he carried on attending business exhibitions.

When I saw him for the last time, two weeks before he died in March 1983, he was emptying the house on the Häberlesberg, as his tax consultant had advised him not to keep a residence in Germany. He told me that I should see him more often, that this would calm him. Although my relationship with my parents had cooled significantly over the years in Germany, we had reconnected in Switzerland. He confessed to my mother, "We treated Mali too badly." What my mother responded I don't know, but perhaps she replied with what she later told me: that I was a funny guy, that she'd never understood me. My father died in Schiltach, in the house on the Häberlesberg; that morning from his balcony he had spoken with someone walking by.

My parents had been planning to set up a foundation "to construct and manage buildings accessible to the elderly and/or disabled, not for profit, and to provide them, if possible, with accommodation and the services they need." The last steps were now taken, and Fondation Ruth et Friedrich Grohe is still in operation.

In 1984, which was as soon as possible after our father's death, I sold my part of the 49%



My father, looking dapper

My mother, flowering

Grohe inheritance to my siblings, and they bought back the 51 % from ITT. We then sold our inherited 26 % of Hansgrohe to the US Masco Corporation, an offshoot of faucet manufacturer Delta. In 1999, Hans Grohe Junior's heirs did the same. By 2016, Klaus and his sons had stepped back from their day-to-day work in the company, while maintaining a position on the supervisory board.

My mother began to flower. She had several boyfriends during the following years, including a former shepherd, Louis. There was a scandalous wine tour with a 'man of the cloth' (a minister or priest). And finally, she was with a well-known hairdresser from Lausanne, Hans Rebstein.

In 1985, I married Magda Sichitiu, a dentist from Romania who had also become interested in the work of Krishnamurti and attended several of his Saanen and Ojai Talks. Eventually I was made a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust at Brockwood Park in Hampshire, England. I invited my mother and Hans Rebstein to visit me there, and they were impressed with the place. Magda met Krishnamurti (he liked her and even asked her to check his teeth) and was eventually made a trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation of America in Ojai, California. We had a house at 712 Country Club Drive. I enjoyed the 10-mile round-trip bicycle ride from there

Wedding day in Santa Barbara with Magda, early 1985

The Pepper Tree in front of Pine Cottage, Krishnamurti's home in Ojai, California; some years ago the tree fell, but new shoots grew out of the huge trunk that remained and it is once again vigorous and beautiful

through Ojai and up to Arya Vihara (now called the Krishnamurti Retreat); sometimes I even took the steeper way up, via Thacher Road. Many times there would be lunch at Arya Vihara with Krishnamurti and other friends. Ojai is an amazing town set in beautiful hills, and I was pleased that John and Christoph could visit me there. Unfortunately, the whole region has become much too dry, a sign of climate change.

Here is a memorable Ojai story from a day hiking with friends in the beautiful, mostly brush-covered mountains above the town; above, too, the stables and paddocks of a school famous for providing many of its students with a horse to take care of. With me were Frode Steen (a former Brockwood student, later an associate professor at UCLA), and his girlfriend. We were on a high, narrow, winding path, and I was walking last. The path was steep on both sides, one side going up, the other going down. Suddenly, approaching from behind, was the sound of shouting and thunderous galloping. With no time even to look around, I jumped down off the path – and the horse followed me. At one point I could just manage to keep its heavy neck off me as we rolled down together. The poor animal, too, was trying to keep its neck off me, as though doing everything possible not to crush me. A shrub ended my fall, but it couldn't stop the horse's. The rider eventually caught up, checked to see if I was all right (I did have some deep scratches on one arm), then rushed after the horse. Later everyone supposed it had been spooked or bitten by insects. We were all rather stunned, especially Frode and his friend, who could simply watch the drama unfold. This story reminds me of one of Mary Zimbalist's recollections, that Annie Besant had informed Krishnamurti that he had two angels to protect him – but also that he shouldn't be overly demanding of them. I remember K himself saying in a small group discussion: An angel goes with you but don't make a fuss about it, otherwise it will leave.

With Claudia at Arya Vihara in Ojai, California

In the end, Magda and I didn't stay married for long, but I'm still in contact with her daughter from a previous marriage: Rukmini Callimachi, a journalist.

In 1986, in Rougemont, in a lovely high valley in the Préalpes vaudoises, I had Chalet Solitude built. This is where I've been living for many years. Numerous friends have spent time here, and two of them even named their

Chalet Solitude on a glorious winter day

own properties – a farm in India, and a house in Portugal – "Solitude". Here are two nice quotes from Krishnamurti regarding the word, which has nothing to do with loneliness. It's more like the word 'alone', which means all one.

'Solitude': it's a lovely word, in which is implied – you know, when you are walking alone in the woods, not carrying all your troubles, your problems, your anxieties. You're just walking, looking at the trees, the clouds, listening to the birds and running water. You're absolutely alone, in solitude you're enjoying. And when you are alone, completely alone, you have left everything behind. You understand?

Solitude means freedom, freedom to be completely alone, unburdened by the past, without the future across the abyss or beyond those lovely mountains. ... solitude means the state of aloneness where the mind is totally innocent, incapable of being hurt with knowledge.

It was a terrible shock to everyone when, at just 51, Yvonne died from pancreatic cancer, in La Vallée de Joux. She had had one daughter and two sons, and there are now eight grandchildren. I will always remember how caring she was.

And our mother developed uterine cancer. She underwent an operation, and later I took her to the Aeskulap Klinik in Brunnen. They reduced the tumour further, but she wanted to go home to La Vallée de Joux and her chicken soup. I talked to her every day on the phone from Ojai. When she died, in 1993 at age 83, I returned from California for the funeral.

After selling the Davos apartment, I often stayed at Hotel Schatzalp instead. Sitting above Davos at 1,900 m, this very nice but old-fashioned *Jugendstil* (Art Nouveau) former tuberculosis

A lovely photo of Yvonne

sanatorium has beautiful views and lots of fresh air. Christoph and John learned to ski nearby, and we enjoyed skiing together in the area on many occasions.

Claudia is also fond of Schatzalp and many of the other places we visited during almost 30 years. This includes Yewfield in Hawkshead Hill in the English Lake District, where ecologically-minded friends have planted Grohe Wood, a small forest of lovely new trees.

Over many winters I visited friends and colleagues of ours in India. Christoph even joined me for one trip. Here are some very brief notes from my India trips.

Indian airport luggage trolleys at that time were made of heavy iron. Once, a trolley accidentally crashed into me and my heels got badly hurt. I sought out a taxi for the trip to the hotel and climbed in, relieved. Then, in the middle of the journey, the car engine stopped. The driver instructed me to push. This happened, in rural areas without lighting and with nobody else around, several times. He easily could have taken off with my luggage, but he was an honourable man. We arrived safely at the hotel, one of the nicest in that region, and I tipped him well. Inside the hotel, I was the only European guest. The other guests were Indian, and even so I was the only one wearing Indian clothing.

I visited the first four Krishnamurti schools in India many times, most often the one at Rishi Valley. It has won numerous awards, including Best Boarding School in India and for its innovative RIVER programme (Rishi Valley Institute for Educational Resources), an approach to rural education now backed by UNICEF. It is also home to the Rishi Valley Institute of Bird Studies & Natural History.

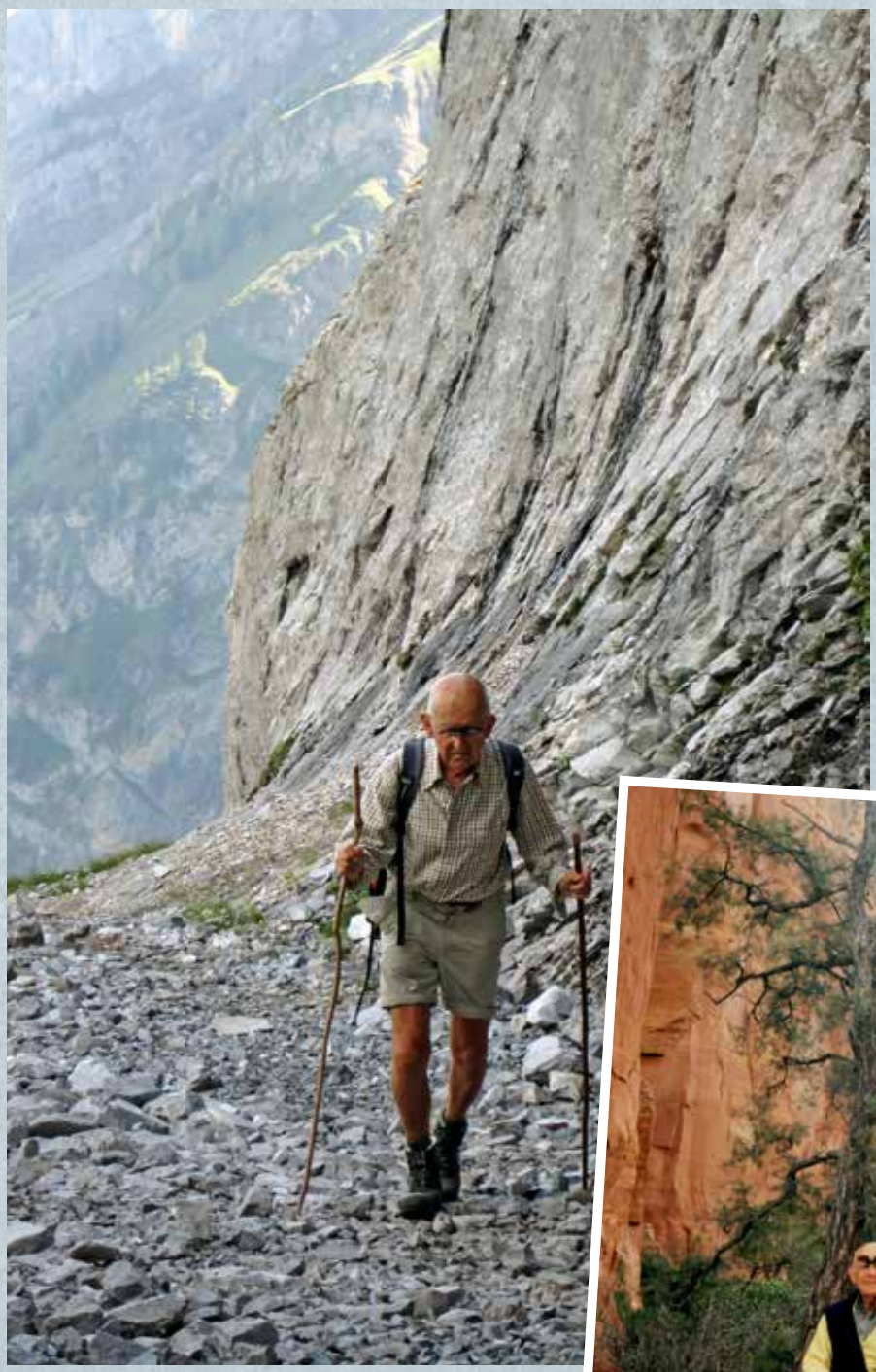
I often went for 'power walks' there with Vijendra Ramola, one of the teachers. We would include the short hikes to Cave Rock and Lion Rock, remains of some of the oldest mountains in the world. There would be amazing sunsets. On many days the students would gather on the side of one of the hills to quietly watch the changing colours together.

India is a fantastic country of extraordinary light, generous people and endless potential. I always appreciated my visits there. As every country, however, it also faces enormous challenges.

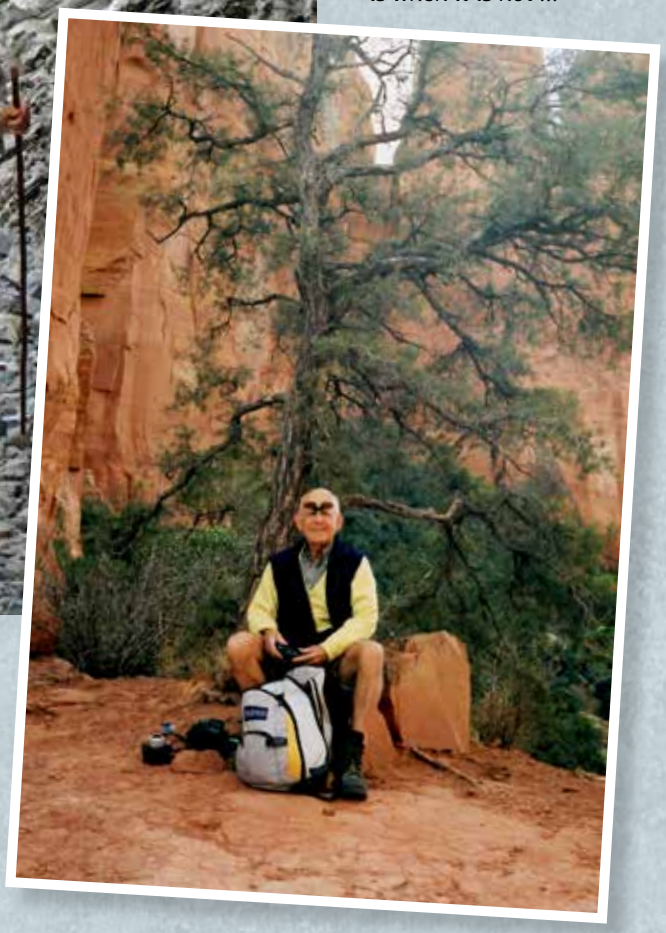
Adyar, Chennai, India – Krishnamurti's favourite place to walk while in Madras

The Final Sale

In 1998, with no one remaining in our branch of the family who wanted to run a large company, Grohe was sold to a British financial institution. They, in turn, sold it to an American



Hiking up Videmanette with Claudia



In Sedona, Arizona with Claudia, 2003. My skin matches the rocks! I made a greeting card with this photo and included inside it my favourite quote, from Krishnamurti: "Love is not at the end of time. Either it is now, or it isn't. And hell is when it is not ..."

Villa Loveno in Buchillon, before it was sold. A few years ago, the new owners wrote, "During the rebuild we retained the original 1904 villa structure, including the roof tiles. I think most people believe despite the major rebuild that we have retained the character of the original building." What the owners haven't yet clarified is whether the tower is still home to the many bats I was always fond of.

one. Now in the hands of Japanese building materials company LIXIL, GROHE appears to be doing better, but I have no direct knowledge of the state of things there.

For at least the final decade of GROHE being in the family, Bernd was a board member and Charles was the president of the board. After the final sale of the company, each went on to develop fantastic properties, including châteaus. Charles sold one of his to François Mitterrand, then another to François Hollande, both past presidents of France. Bernd was also one of the founders of Private Client Bank, Switzerland's first investment office bank.

Christoph and Marie-Claude's daughters, Adeline and Cindy, playing on the ponton at Villa Loveno

We sold the house in Buchillon in 2009. Christoph had lived there for ten years with his family. I would stay in the little house beside the main house on the way to and from Brockwood Park. Christoph's daughters, Adeline and Cindy, liked to play in that little house when I was there, and on the ponton. I would do my daily exercises on the ponton, getting up now and then to take pictures of the ever-changing lake and sky. It was a glorious place.

It was always nice with all my grandchildren. When they were young, John

and Corinne's children would come to Rougemont in the summer and we would go on mountain walks and bike rides. When he was very young, David liked to climb into the ice-cold chalet fountain, sometimes fully dressed. Later, when Christoph and Marie-Claude divorced, contact with Adeline and Cindy became difficult, and seldom, which I very much regretted.

Many of my photos – taken in Switzerland, the Black Forest, England, California, India and other places – have been included in the annual publications I produce with Claudia, Javier Gómez Rodríguez, Jürgen Brandt and the rest of my team: Raman Patel, Nick Short and Rabindra Singh. Our Timeless Change calendars of quotes and landscape photos, Newsletters that include articles by others and again my photos, and other brochures, centre around the work of Krishnamurti and are sent out each year to a long list of recipients, directly from the printers in Germany and India.

I am very fond of staying in communication with people. Every morning for years, rain or shine, weekend or holiday, I dictate emails and email responses to my correspondence editor, Marta Dinis, who loves her job. Then I sing a

Lake Geneva from the ponton

Raman, Javier, Jürgen and Claudia helping me say good-bye to the Sulzhütte, 2017 – plus Nick and Rabindra, who couldn't be there

verse of the old song How High the Moon, which she enjoys and sends on to a few others. (See the Les Paul & Mary Ford version, or the one by Nat King Cole & June Christy.) Sometimes I sing her favourite song, Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen. (See Louis Armstrong singing it.)

I also enjoy family gatherings, though these days I have less energy for large get-togethers. I did make an exception to a flexible rule not to celebrate anniversaries, by having a big party for my 90th and 92nd birthdays (there was also one for my 50th; see pp. 42–43) at the excellent Le Cerf restaurant in Rougemont, owned by John and Christoph. At my 90th party, Christoph and John announced that they were planting 90 trees in l'Orient, which touched me deeply.

In 2021 I wanted to travel to England as I used to do every year to spend time at Brockwood Park. But the idea of getting from Rougemont to Geneva, Geneva to London, and London to Brockwood

Charles and Bernd helping me celebrate my 90th birthday at Le Cerf in Rougemont, 2019 (photo by Raphael Faux)

Klaus with Doris Bonn (Epi), Inge's sister, at my 90th birthday party (photo by Raphael Faux)

Nadine Reymond (widow of Paul Ernest), Catherine Genini (their daughter), Virginie (wife of Johnny), Johnny Reymond (son of Nadine and Paul Ernest; Johnny is 'the last of the Reymonds'), my cousin Alice, at my 90th (photo by Raphael Faux)

Klaus, Shanna Van Aken, Nicolas, and Birgit Steinle (mother of Jan Nikolas), at my 90th (photo by Raphael Faux)

sounded exhausting. Luckily, I could rent Klaus's turboprop, which would make for a quick and easy direct flight from Saanen to Southampton, which is much closer to Brockwood than London is.

A few days before our trip, we took a pleasantly quiet walk on the shady footpath between the airstrip and the river. On the day of travel, the calm faded. We were standing beside the plane, speaking with the two pilots, when an incredible wind rose up like I had never seen there before. The Pilatus PC-12 is Swiss-made – very elegant and with a strong motor. But a few years earlier, one had tragically crashed on its flight back to Saanen. Not a story to remember while boarding in gale-force winds, even when the pilots are insisting that such crashes are rare.

We flew at 8,500 m and 500 km/hour. I hadn't realized that a propeller plane could fly like that. The takeoff was very rough and the turbulence continued for much of the journey. Soon the plane dropped hard and the tray tables rose from their storage units and crashed in front of us with a bang. If we hadn't had our seat belts on, we would have hit the ceiling. This could easily have happened again while I was in the low and narrow toilet. Claudia had to get me out of there while it was still very bumpy, as I found it difficult to move about in the cramped space. The landing, however, despite the windy English weather, was remarkably smooth. The

pilots were very professional. And after all that, we were more than happy to leave the scheduling of the return journey to them.

The Family Grows

Since that time – just turning 92 – I've no longer been travelling. I'm content to walk slowly in Rougemont. And I still feel deeply connected to nature. *So ist es.*

My sons have lovely families and appear to be happy in their work. Christoph buys, restores and sells classic cars (Christoph Grohe SA, Fine Classic Cars), and it's always interesting to hear about his latest automotive find and where he's travelling with his partner, Anouk Anouilh de Mestral. John develops properties (Grohe Développement SA), and his children help with this; again I'm always keen to learn about their

John with his wife, Corinne, in front of Le Cerf (photo by Raphael Faux)

Christoph and John in front Le Cerf, Rougemont, 2019 (photo by Raphael Faux)

Christoph with his partner, Anouk Anouilh de Mestral

latest project. Also I very much enjoy John and Christoph's popular restaurant in Rougemont, Le Cerf.

I have six flowering grandchildren and three very young great-grandchildren. Christoph and Marie-Claude's children, mentioned earlier, are Adeline (who with Axel Robadey has son Yohan) and Cindy. The children of John and his wife, Corinne, are Nastasja (who with Tom Brossard has son Max), Laura (who with Geoff Moret has daughter Naomi), Alexia and David.

Every day there is something fascinating in the news regarding the human psyche. I maintain an interest in nature protection and ecology. I've had solar panels on my houses since the late 1970s. After 15 years or so of not owning a car, I had to start renting a small one for the shopping and for getting to a higher point behind the chalet. From up there I can sometimes walk where it's level or downhill, while watching for red kites *(oiseau cerf-volant rouge / Rotmilan Vogel)*, chamois and other animals. Not long ago we saw a lynx who had just caught a chamois, and small snakes are not so rare. I also maintain an interest in an education that might bring about a more compassionate society. Above all, there is a wonder regarding life and the origin of all things.

John and Corinne's children, and their children: Alexia, Nastasja with Max, Laura with Naomi, and David in 2021 (photo by Raphael Faux)

In 2019 (photo by Raphael Faux)

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A visit to Friedrich Grohe: the former company head is still interested in current developments

Dr Ulrike Heuser-Greipl visited Friedrich Grohe at his home in Switzerland

Open for changes, enthusiastic about innovations: we all share these traits at GROHE. They also characterise a man who spent years as head of our firm: Friedrich Grohe. The former CEO, now 86, is the oldest son of the company's eponymous founder. Today the passionate hobby photographer lives most of the time in Rougemont in the Swiss canton of Vaud. Recently he invited Dr Ulrike Heuser-Greipl, Vice President Public & Investor Relations, to talk about GROHE's evolution and also a little about his life.

Friedrich Grohe was born in Schiltach in the Black Forest in 1929, and the factory premises were like a second home to him while he was growing up. He spent many hours happily playing there as a child. He also spent part of his youth in Hemer. Later he was a trainee there for five years, working in every department from the foundry to the back office. This excellently prepared him to join the management board of his parents' firm in 1959. He oversaw the creation of the Lahr factory, taking less than three years to build it up into the largest GROHE plant. While occupying various management positions during the years until 1969, he greatly contributed to GROHE's success with his business acumen and a strong pioneering spirit.

From earliest childhood, Friedrich Grohe felt closely attuned with nature, a fascination that has stayed with him all his life. Today he enjoys going on daily long walks lasting two or three hours, no matter whether it rains or shines. He also very actively supports the foundation and schools devoted to the teachings of the Indian thinker and philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. He spends at least four or five months of every year at the Brockwood Park School in England to share ideas with its teachers and students. "Training and education are major themes of his life, and especially teaching people to be open-minded and willing to question things, also to pave the way for changes," reports Dr Ulrike Heuser-Greipl. "While talking with him, one keenly notices his openness, his enthusiasm for changes and innovations and his forward-looking mindset."

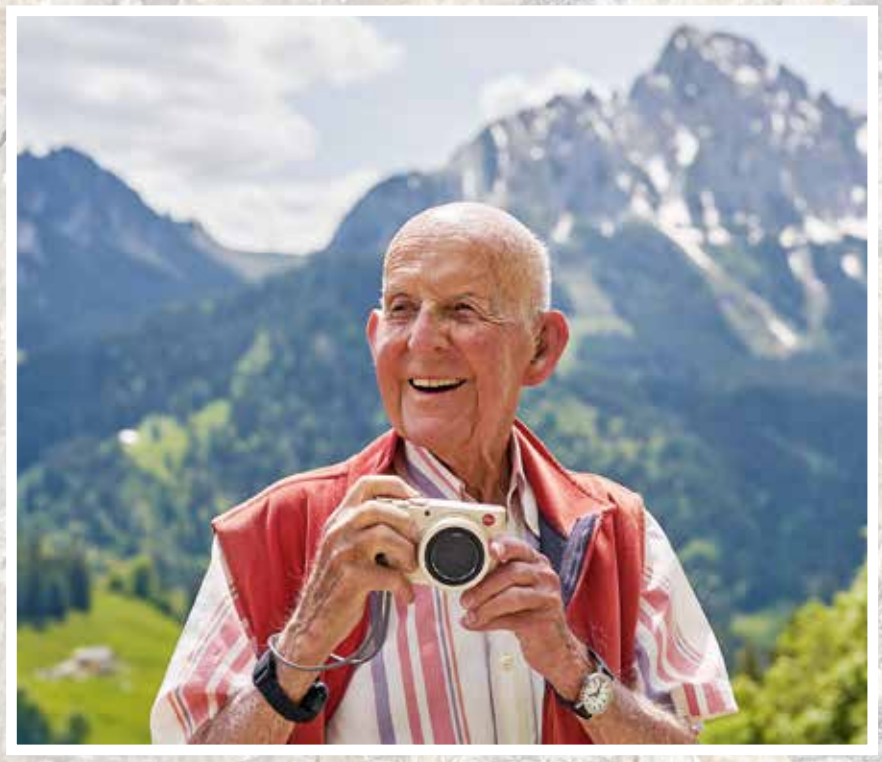
There is also something else that Friedrich Grohe shares with the firm he once led: a commitment to environmental protection and sustainability. "I am passionate about conservation and environmentalism, and have been using solar electricity since 1970," says the agile grandfather of six, who still feels linked to the company today.

Friedrich Grohe recalls ...

"When my father bought 'Berkenhoff und Paschedag' back in 1936, GROHE's staff moved into the building and the huge old chimneystacks were still standing."

"This photograph shows the firm's facilities in Hemer in the 1970s. Soon afterwards we had them demolished and moved to Edelburg. We received a state subsidy because our premises were within the city limits."

"This is the first part of the new plant, built in Lahr-Dinglingen in 1960/61. In those days there were more people working in Lahr than in Hemer. We had found an ideal, flat site for the new factory: 30,000 square metres costing only 95 pfennigs each."



On a short walk above Rougemont, with Videmanette in the background, 2022 (photo by Sara Fargas Prieto)

In August 2024, at almost 95 *(photo by Dina Radif)*