

THE TRUE FAIRYTALE
OF CLEVER HANS

hansgrohe

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Of course we don't want to tell any fairy tales here...

... Even though the story of how a three-man business founded by Hans Grohe in 1901 in the little Black Forest town of Schiltach became a world-wide enterprise with over 3,200 employees might seem to some to be more like a fairy tale... What follows is the story of the firm of Hansgrohe, spanning more than a century of growth and development. And the story of Hans Grohe himself, the handyman, the craftsman, the visionary pioneer in the field of sanitation, without whom the company of Hansgrohe could never have come into being. And the story of his descendants who right up to the present day lead and guide the firm of Hansgrohe SE.

It's not a dry-as-dust story, and doesn't claim to be complete in itself or to be a scientific account; it is told here sometimes tongue in cheek, with great joy in the telling, giving deep insights into the world of Hansgrohe and into the family firm, founded by Clever Hans. And if the story of "Lucky Hans" ("Hans im Glück") as once told by the Grimm Brothers in their collection of fairy tales is unfamiliar to you, just read on. Truth is stranger than fiction, as they say...

HANS HAD SERVED HIS MASTER FOR SEVEN YEARS AND NOW HE HAD AN URGENT DESIRE TO GO TO SCHILTACH. SO HE ASKED HIS MASTER TO GIVE HIM HIS WAGES. “LADDIE”, SAID HIS MASTER, “YOU DONE REAL GOOD HERE. LOOK, HERE’S A CHUNK OF GOLD. THAT’S FAR BETTER THAN ANY STOCKS AND SHARES.”

HANS WAS HAPPY AT THAT AND QUICKLY SET OUT ON HIS WAY, FOR THERE WAS A LOT TO DO IN THE BLACK FOREST AND IN THE OTHER PLACES AROUND. ON HIS WAY, AS YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, HE MET A MOUNTED MESSENGER, WHO CHEATED HIM OUT OF HIS GOLD AND GAVE HIM HIS HORSE FOR IT. BUT IT WAS HANS WHO DID THE CHEATING, BECAUSE NOW ON HORSEBACK HE COULD GET ALONG MUCH FASTER (ANYTHING ELSE IS A FAIRY STORY!). BECAUSE CLEVER HANS KNEW: TIME WAITS FOR NO MAN. TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT, AT THE END OF HIS TRAVELS HE MET A KNIFEGRINDER. BY THEN HANS HAD A NICE FAT GOOSE, WHICH HE HAD EXCHANGED FOR AN EVEN FATTER PIG, THAT IN TURN HE HAD SWAPPED FOR A COW, WHICH HE HAD SWAPPED FOR HIS HORSE (KEEP UP...!). THE KNIFEGRINDER SAW THE FAT GOOSE AND PERSUADED HANS TO SWAP HER FOR HIS LOVELY ROUND GRINDSTONE.

“THAT WAS A GOOD BIT OF BUSINESS”, THOUGHT HANS. HE SHOULDERED THE HEAVY GRINDSTONE, WALKED ALONG THE KINZIG AND SOON FOUND HIMSELF IN SCHILTACH. “JUST TAKE A LOOK AT THAT!” HE SAID TO HIMSELF, AND SO HE BUILT HIMSELF A HOUSE BY THE RIVER AND BOUGHT AN INEXPENSIVE DRIVE BELT. THIS HE WOUND ROUND HIS GRINDSTONE, AND VERY SOON YOU COULD HEAR THE MURMUR OF SEVERAL LITTLE MACHINES WITH WHOSE HELP CLEVER HANS WAS ABLE TO PRODUCE SUCH FINE SHOWERS THAT IT FILLED HIM WITH JOY. “UNICA!” HE CRIED, AND THEN QUIETLY (BECAUSE IT WAS STILL EARLY MORNING) “SELECTA!”. SEVEN MORE YEARS PASSED AND HE COULD CALL THREE OR FOUR LUMPS OF GOLD HIS OWN. HE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH LIFE, WITH HIMSELF AND OF COURSE WITH THE HORSE THAT HAD GOT HIM THAT FAR. AND, IF THEY HAVE NOT DIED, THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

HOW HANS SET OUT FROM LUCKENWALDE AND IN SCHILTACH BECAME LUCKY HANS.

HANSGROHE, A (VERY) SHORT
HISTORY OF THE FAMILY

Time seems to fly, and even the world seems smaller! As the crow flies, the town of Schiltach in the lovely Kinzig valley – where the heart of Hansgrohe beats today – is about 500 kilometres from Luckenwalde, just outside Berlin: 500 kilometres from the heart of the Black Forest to the heart of the republic.

Luckenwalde?

Yes, Luckenwalde; in this 800-year-old town to the south of Berlin is where the family home of Hans Grohe stood – a man always ahead of his time, a pioneer, a craftsman deeply rooted in its soil, a handyman, an inventor and, even more important, a businessman with an eye for the future.

Let us cast our eyes back a bit to the 19th Century. What a time that was! Everywhere you look something is happening. Upheaval all around that threatens to change everyday life. Yesterday it was steam power, now it's electricity! Horse-drawn vehicles giving way to the motor-car, dark alleyways to wide, bright boulevards. Railway lines like spiders' webs linking people and places. Telegraph bells ringing, airships droning overhead, moving pictures making people gasp, weep and laugh...

It was into a time like this that Otto Johannes Grohe was born. But everyone called him Hans.

Luckenwalde, 1871.

It was a Sunday in May. Some were hurrying on their way back from church,

others sat over their Sunday morning mug of beer. The clock in the tower of St. John's church had just struck twelve when a loud cry stopped everyone in their tracks. They said it was such a loud cry that it could be heard on the other side of Berlin. Wreathed in smiles, they all pointed to the house of the master weaver. "Another new family member at Karl-Ludwig's!" Hans Grohe had arrived on the scene.

May 14, just before noon.

A nasty wind was blowing through the streets; cold, too cold, thought the man hurrying home, keeping a tight grip on his hat. Despite the cold, there was a scent of lilac and lily-of-the-valley in the air of Luckenwalde, now and again mixed with the less pleasant smell from the factory chimneys of Berlin. The master weaver Karl Ludwig Grohe twirled at his moustache. That Berlin! It was bursting at the seams! Overnight it had grown by 100,000, no, 200,000! And everyone sooner or later needed clothing and shoes, house and fuel, bread and a bed. The Kaiser wasn't going to give them that for nothing, and even less that man Bismarck. A bowl of water for a family: that could never suffice.

He took his gold watch out of his waistcoat pocket, took a look at it and speeded up his steps. We must have a theatre here, he thought, and his thoughts went to Theodor Fontane. He knew his stuff, that Fontane! He could spin yarns, too, writing week by week in the papers about the big theatre in Berlin. A

*Facing page:
the young Hans Grohe (left) with his parents
and siblings. Early 1880's*



THE YOUNG LAD WAS PRECISE AND CONSCIENTIOUS.



Luckenwalde lies in the Baruth valley, surrounded by delightful countryside: woods, lakes and fields. Here, in the neighbourhood of Berlin, Otto Johannes Grohe was born on May 14, 1871. He was the sixth child born to the family of craftspeople.

Huguenot at that, living proof that it was good to mix foreign blood with local – and also craftsmanship and trade. *“If you want to get on in life, you must enjoy life”*, he had said. And so it was. A journeyman’s life is good for the legs, but it also keeps one’s grey matter alive. And he, Karl Ludwig Grohe, would send his sons on their travels so that they could make their fortune – and one of them would be Lucky Hans.

“Father. Father, come quickly!” His youngest child had run to meet him, and grasped his hand firmly. *“Father, please come quickly ... To Mother!”*

The bells of St. John’s were just ringing the midday chimes as they opened the big door of the house and rushed upstairs. His wife Luise gave him a satisfied smile: *“A Sunday’s child!”* she said.

Almost five pounds

“Almost five pounds!” muttered the midwife and handed the father the tiny bundle of newborn life. They had decided to call him Hans, but for the purposes of the Luckenwalde Registry Office he was officially named Otto Johannes. The sixth in line.

“And he came too early”, laughed the mother, *“Typical Grohe child, always in a hurry.”* The maker of cloth opened the cloth round his child to make sure. *“A boy!”*

You know, nothing ever stays as it was. Even grandfather Friedrich Grohe had an eye for the incomplete, the half-finished,

which always spurred him on to accept the challenge that presented. And his practical hands knew always where the nail had to go in, even while the others were talking about it. *“That must be fixed now, this very moment!”* This well-known word of the old master weaver from Silesia was to become the motto by which Hans Grohe lived.

Up to the middle of the 19th Century the making of cloth was the most important profession. But industrialisation and technology were soon to make their presence felt here, too. In these times the weaver bought his wool, took it to the dyer and oversaw the cloth-making right through to the finished product. Some of these products were sold where they were made, but much was taken far and wide by itinerant journeymen. New people, new languages, new customs – on their travels they learnt to see the world with new eyes. .

Warm showers

In the yard outside the houses of the master weavers stood large wooden tubs full of cold water. Valuable materials, some of them very flammable, would be in the house, and one couldn’t be too careful. Mother Luise, a practical person like her husband, used them to dip the kids in one by one whatever the weather. If it was particularly cold, then she’d pour a large jug of warm water over the shivering child as a reward for not protesting too much. Could that have put the first idea of warm showers into the head of young Hans?



Hans was barely five years old when Mr. Daimler and Mr. Benz – in case the horse ever got lame – invented the first motor hackney carriage.

1885

Michaelmas 1885. Hans' school days are over. On May 14 that year he had celebrated his 14th birthday. On September 27 he was confirmed and the next day *"thrown out into the middle of life"*, as he himself put it. And that meant nothing less than an apprenticeship in Levin Bernhardt's cloth factory in Luckenwalde.

Chop, chop

"On Monday morning at 7 I started work," Hans Grohe remembers. *"I was put under Auguste Zipperlein. 'Chop, chop!,' she would cry when things weren't moving fast enough for her. She had had a good schooling, spoke English and French, and had read a lot of*

books. I learnt a lot from her, though she didn't very much like me. Otherwise, as was expected of an educated young woman in those days, she was a bit prim and proper. In a factory full of men she didn't have an easy time of things."

His boss, too, looked him deep in the eyes: *"Listen, lad: it's eighteen steps, before you've made a bolt of cloth out of the raw wool."* Behind his back the apprentice whispered, *"Yes, and a hundred to go and get a roll and some sausage for break-time!"*

Five whole years he worked there, learning his craft from the very basics upwards; and in so doing he learnt those 18 steps by heart, making drawings and notes, wondering whether here or there one of those steps could be improved upon or could be done more efficiently. The young lad was precise and conscientious!

The machine hall of a Luckenwalde weaving-mill, around 1900.

1888

*Eiffel Tower in Paris,
built by Gustave Eiffel for
the World Exhibition to celebrate
the centenary of the French
Revolution. It initially met stiff
resistance from Parisians,
who regarded it as an eyesore.*



No bed of roses

"Until I was 16 I worked ten hours a day. After that, it was ten to twelve hours ... And one winter long I attended the school run by the Co-operative Society." Those years of apprenticeship: they were certainly no bed of roses! A long hard day's work was followed by further educational training for the apprentices. "We went there every Sunday afternoon from half past two to half past four, and every Monday and Thursday from six to eight in the evening." The days passed, and some of them seemed eternally long.

A better land to live in

*Woe is me, when winter comes,
Where do I find the flowers,
Where the sun,
And where the shadows from its rays?
The walls around are silent and cold;
The flags flap noisily in the cold wind.*

In his diary for the year 1805 the poet Friedrich Hölderlin tried to express the emptiness and frustration of life for working people. And these early days of the 19th Century were marked by gatherings of the people and peasants' revolts. Master craftsmen and journeymen got together with ordinary workers, with farmers and poets, to demand a republic. The so-called Vormärz (those unsettled years between 1815 and 1848 in Germany) was well and truly in the past, but even now, years later, things were still bad for the workers in the hat factories and weaving mills in Luckenwalde. They demanded more rights, better wages, the revolution! But they still didn't get what they wanted.

And the hardship increased; the ringleaders who demanded decent working conditions found themselves blacklisted. Hans Grohe never forgot those days, and it was with this deep conviction that things had to get better that he set out on his travels as a journeyman. In 1890 he celebrated his departure from Luckenwalde with his fellow journeymen. The years on the road, a must for every young man of his kind, were about to begin. So, with his weaver's hat and a stout walking stick he set out. After five months as a pattern weaver in Cottbus he travelled further, this time westwards in the direction of Aachen.

Diploma for working day and night

"The day's work in the mill began at 7 a.m. and didn't end before sunset." Twice a week after work he attended the school of weaving, not finishing until midnight. Finally in 1892 he held in his hands the precious Master Weaver Diploma, and set off on his way back to Luckenwalde. But shortly afterwards he set to work with ambition again, determined to see the world. This time he went south, across the Alps, through the Brenner Pass as far as Lana in the Tyrol.

Eyes and ears wide open

Such travels were indeed a hard school to go through. The introduction of modern machines had put many a weaver out of work, and in Luckenwalde Hans had striven to get people to stick together in those times of need and to try and find ways out of the misery. So he kept his eyes and ears wide open, learning and passing on his ideas to others.

A JOURNEYMAN'S LIFE MEANS GOING THROUGH A HARD SCHOOL.



*Hans Grohe (standing, right)
with fellow students at the Aachen
School of Weaving.*

FROM KAUFBEUREN TO THE BADENER LAND, FROM THE TYROL TO THE VALLEYS OF THE BLACK FOREST.



Matthias Hohner's Harmonica:
only the best will do.

Once learnt, never forgotten

He mastered all processes from the setting up of the looms to the completion of the finished product, prepared every job he did very carefully and amazed both foremen and even the master weavers themselves. *"Hey, have a dekkko at that Hans!"*, exclaimed the old hands, the master weavers from Saxony. Everything that was placed on the machine he examined carefully with both hand and eye. *"Do that now, and it'll save you a lot of grief later!"* he would say to anyone who thought this all too much hassle.

"On March 15 I received a letter from my parents, saying that they were worried that I hadn't written. I'd been away from Baden for four weeks; I'd been to Strasbourg. Had I come under the influence of the soldiers or ended up in my coffin? 'Look, you went off in order to learn something; so hold on to your hard-earned cash and go on learning. Keep out of bad company, and then you will find favour with God and man'..."

"In June 1893 I left Lana in Tyrol and worked in a woollen mill in Kaufbeuren, then I journeyed through Württemberg and Baden to Strasbourg, then on foot from Konstanz to Meersburg, Wangen, Isny and Kempten all the way to Rosenheim. I got there on July 2... Then I set off to Crimmitschau in Saxony, where I took a job until October 1. Back in my homeland again! Master Weaver at Otto and Son, then at Levin Bernhard, where I had started my training...", as Hans Grohe recalled 60 years later.

Tasted spätzle for the first time, and the first kiss

Hans wore out many a pair of boots on his journeying through Württemberg, tasted the local noodles (spätzle) for the first time (and not missing potatoes with cabbage one little bit), had waved at (no more than that?) the local girls, and had sampled the local Neckar wines – in moderation, of course, as his father had urged him. He had got further, much further than many of his contemporaries. If he should ever settle down, then maybe in this beautiful neck of the woods, which had so pleased Freiligrath and that Hölderlin and Schelling. *"Der Schiller und der Hegel, die sind bei uns die Regel"* was the catchword in the old university town of Tübingen – the poet and the philosopher were the great figures in that town. Before he moved on he wrote home: *"Father, I want to see the whole of the Black Forest, and then I'll come back home."*

There he got to know the people who were good with their hands and brains, who kept their pockets well and truly under control, the sometimes dour and very hard working folk of the Alb, the more open and friendly ones from Baden. *"Good honest and liberal folk, they are"*, he said admiringly, the cloth makers and weavers around the Hohenzollern, especially those round Trossingen who could play the harmonica to lighten every troubled soul.

They must be the very best...

"The world is my oyster!" Matthias Hohner might have said to him. He, too, a progres-

sive thinker, put his Swabian diligence to work to produce a better harmonica than anyone else, developing precision tools and machines to do so. He had no money and no well-to-do friends, but perhaps he had said to Hans by way of farewell, *“Anyone can make a harmonica. But Hohner harmonicas: they have got to be the very best.”* Hans took good note of those words, or maybe he knew this already. Only the best will do.

Roman mercenaries and the burden of the years

If you look at old maps, the Black Forest looks something like an ancient mother, on whose back the burden of a thousand years bears down. Bowed low, she looks deep into the valleys of Swabia and Baden. Roman mercenaries and peasants’ revolts; Napoleon’s soldiers and the inventions of Gottlieb Daimler; Robert Bosch’s factories; great famines and droughts; but also the treasures of nature and the old songs of the people longing to walk tall: all of this she saw and heard over the centuries. At 22, Hans Grohe had seen more of the world than thousands of others. Now he had returned, but what he had seen and heard and learnt in this southern part of Germany would never leave him.

By now the towns and cities were bursting at the seams, and Luckenwalde had had more than its fair share of the smoke from the factory chimneys of Berlin. Many of Hans’ contemporaries had had to pack their bundles and leave; poverty and hardship had driven them to seek their fortune elsewhere, maybe even abroad. Wilhelm Liebknecht had peacefully denounced

things on the great festival meadow in Luckenwalde; and the police had not intervened. In the local hostelrys and taverns freethinkers and free spirits discussed and argued into the early hours that “other times” must surely come. But better times? Hans did not know the answer to that.

A time for everything

1871–1873: the years when many industrial firms were founded in Germany. Houses were being built skywards, in America even higher. Wars great and small were still being fought, but at least in The Hague the more sensible statesmen finally sat down together to work out ways to peace between nations. At the very same time women from all over the world were meeting in the house next door for their first Conference for World Peace. Were you listening, gentlemen? Work was still hard, competition fierce; machines were turning faster and faster. Hans Grohe knew that every effort must be put into things, and that furthermore even that was not enough. The have-nots, poor blighters, as well as the well-heeled (as the shoemakers appropriately dubbed them) should receive quality goods for their money. Quality, quality! That’s what had been drummed into him. Materials that did not go threadbare; good strong cloth that could withstand hard wear on the factory floor! Shoes that were properly sewn and nailed, that didn’t lose their soles at the first puddle! He knew that if the customer was satisfied, he would come back for more – whether to the clothier or the baker or the plumber.



At 22 Hans Grohe had seen more of the world than thousands of others.

WITH BAG AND BAGGAGE, CHILDREN AND ALL: DESTINATION BLACK FOREST.

1893 saw the marriage between Hans Grohe and Luise Hannemann. Tragically she died young, having however given him three wonderful children: Helene, Liesel and Hans junior. After her death in 1897 Hans did not wish to remain in Luckenwalde much longer. After all, he had served as a master weaver for six long years already. Enough was enough, so: off again into the big wide world...

Now is the Month of Maying...

In early May 1899, even before he was 28 years old, Hans said phooey to the prophets of doom who saw the end of the world coming as one century yielded to the next. He gave away everything that he didn't need to the poor, packed his bags and set off. Parting from his parents and family and friends was hard, but it was time to move on and out.

Helene was six years old, Liesel and young Hans just four, when the little family group set out via Berlin, Halle and Karlsruhe to the Black Forest. They travelled in a special compartment, while their possessions were sent on ahead. Soon the children could put the sorrow and tears of their grandparents behind them and excitedly enjoy the thrill of travelling behind a real steam locomotive – and a diesel! The journey took then three long days which ended with the journey up the Kinzig Valley Railway. This little line was just fifteen years old, and since 1892 there had even been a little station called Schiltach. This was their destination. *"I first took a look at the churchyard, and wondered if one day I might find my last resting-place here..."*



Promises, promises ...

They had telegraphed a cloth-maker called Korndörfer in Schiltach to tell him when to expect them. In those days travel by train was much more reliable than with those new-fangled automobiles. Hans had also done his homework a long time before – a strict rule of life before starting something new. So he already knew a lot about the history of Schiltach, about the jobs and crafts, about the wood trade and the craftsmen and their privileges. *“This little town has been burnt down three times in a row,”* he told the children, *“twice quite recently.”*

Hans had decided to serve in Korndörfer’s factory for a while. *“They had promised me the earth. K. wrote to me that he hoped I would like it here so much I would never want to move. He was talking very big.”* From then on he mistrusted all big mouths.

The problem solver

By the side of his house in Bach Street in the centre of the large village that liked to call itself a small town, Wilhelm Schwab would sit in front of his metal-workshop and smoke a quiet pipe. Folk were proud of their little town, where almost everyone spoke with a Swabian accent whatever lot were in power. He would wait for this young man who had come to live next door at No.33, because he knew that, if there was a tricky problem that needed solving, one that defeated both him and his partner Voigt, if a machine had gone on the blink again or kept shedding its drive belt, he could call on Hans Grohe for help. *“We’ve got a little*

problem again!” was all he needed to say, because he knew that there was hardly a problem, let alone a little one, that this young man from Luckenwalde couldn’t tackle. Not only that, this man seemed to be able to solve problems even before they occurred. *“He may be from outside, but he’s a chap you can talk to”,* was the general opinion of him.

As the old century was drawing to a dignified close the two men got on so

In 1899, after the death of his first wife, Hans Grohe moves with his three children Helene, Liesel und Johann from Luckenwalde to Schiltach. There he marries again. In 1904, his marriage with Magdalene Schöttle produces a son, Friedrich. For a third time Hans Grohe celebrates his wedding; this time the happy partner is Emma Wolber, who in 1937 gives birth to their son Klaus.

Schiltach		HILFEN	
Name	Birth	Name	Birth
Hans Grohe	1899	Helene Grohe	1899
Liesel Grohe	1904	Johann Grohe	1904
Magdalene Schöttle	1904	Friedrich Schöttle	1904
Emma Wolber	1937	Klaus Wolber	1937

On May 20 1899 the name of Hans Grohe was entered into the Schiltach register of residents.

well together that they both decided that sooner or later they would be their own masters. It was with a heavy heart that Korndörfer let the young master weaver go.

“RIGHT, LET’S GET
STARTED,” HE CRIED
AND SET TO
WORK WITH A WILL.



*A hundred years ago
people knew that Hans Grohe was
someone you could talk to,
and so the items produced by Hansgrohe
were those that people wanted:
rosettes for flues and taps, sieves for drains,
shower heads, ballcocks, or metal cups
for hanging lamp shades.*

At the first stroke ...

Hans Grohe set his alarm for 4 a.m. and set off on foot for the mill by the Court of Feoffees, where he was waiting at 5.30 for Wilhelm Schwab. “*Right, let’s get going!*” he said, rolling up his sleeves. It was exactly the First of April 1900 when the new little business began with the production of outer cases for alarm clocks for the local clock making industry. Almost exactly a year later, the building burnt down!

As if one blow wasn’t enough!

One hardly knew which way to turn, but Hans did. There was an empty woodshed nearby, an old saw mill! Hadn’t it at some time housed Voight and Thieringer’s metalworkshop? There was even a stream right by it. “We can use that water to drive our machines,” thought Hans, very pleased at the idea.

But his old partner had got cold feet after the first disaster. So Hans looked round for two others to work with him. Good solid folk – Clever Hans again! It was June 15, 1901.

Farmers and craftsmen, merchants and traders, whether near or far: they all needed parts for their paraffin lamps! And how necessary were brass cooking vessels, how cosy were hot water bottles, how essential dampers to keep fires under control and protect the wooden walls behind from the heat! And up on the roof that decorative metal finial! The customer came of his own accord or was sought, some brought their own sketches

of what they required; and if that was just too vague, Hans grabbed a pencil and did a better sketch of what the tinsmith or other customer had in mind. This was just up his street – racking his brains, exploring, experimenting until it was right.

Cleanliness is next to godliness

Oh dear, things were anything but right in those days in the field of sanitation, of health and hygiene. The privy for “number ones” and “number twos” was just outside the door, in the stairwell or the yard, where at least there was the pump for fresh water – and now increasingly there was water in the house, the kitchen sink with the big bucket where the family washed as well. And the waste water? It just found its way downwards into the ditch, where it collected all kinds of muck. And the stench, following the rules of physics rather than of good taste, found its way upwards into kitchen and sitting-room and bedroom.

Recognising the danger meant finding a way to get rid of the stench. Almost incidentally Hans Grohe invents something to minimise these unpleasant odours. “*I succeeded in putting together a little anti-siphon trap which met with much approval and brought in a good profit as well.*”

“One of the Fourteen ‘Oly ‘Elpers”

Very soon news of the skill with which things were made in the metalworkshop in Schiltach had spread far and wide in the Black Forest, Craftspeople swore by quality, and when there was a tricky technical problem, nobody was to be found

up and down the Kinzig who could solve it as well as these metalworking geniuses. “He’s one of the Fourteen ‘Oly’ Elpers” was the general opinion, even among the Protestants, who did not hold with such ideas (“How can fourteen people who died hundreds of years ago help with today’s problems? I ask you!” their pastor used to thunder from his pulpit). If orders were slow in coming, it was no time to sit back and wait for them. Hans would saddle his trusty bicycle, travel up and down the valleys and call on all the tinsmiths and plumbers and fitters – anyone and everyone who could need his metal products. “But ... I also took items with me that I hadn’t produced myself. They sometimes brought in more profit than my own modest products. I soon became an excellent travelling salesman! But it was hard work, because many customers ... were difficult to find, because they often worked away from their workshops. So it was early mornings, midday and after their day’s work. I couldn’t think of stopping for lunch most days ...”

The new business flourished. Less than six months later a third worker and a further six months later a fourth had to be found.

The years passed, and in private as well as business life some things went well, others less well. Hans Grohe asked for the hand of Magdalene Schöttle. She didn’t refuse him, and so he married for the second time. August 28, 1904: Hans was now 33 years old, and soon he could rejoice like his father before him over the birth of another son, Friedrich Grohe.



The Spittelsäge, the one-time sawmill, on the occasion of the Kaiser’s birthday. In 1901, in the small bright building on the right, Hans Grohe laid the foundation stone of what was to become a world-wide business.

Hygiene, hygiene

The matter of hygiene came at just the right moment for Master Hans. In Berlin they had drummed into people that every respectable German should bathe once a week, for reasons both of cleanliness and of public health. Berlin Sanitary Works filled everyone with enthusiasm with their tin baths – and Hans Grohe now had a shower head out of pressed and soldered metal for Mr. Everyman.

In the 1905 Schiltach Register of Products a new item was added to the sieves and dampers and lamp fittings made by Hans Grohe’s firm: the overhead shower. One felt like kissing him for joy that he had found the way to become one of the most successful shower manufacturers in the world: the pioneer of hygiene.



“Showerheads,
fine showerheads, solidly made!
Fine sieves for your
kitchen! Reliable ballcocks!
Rosettes for every type
of water tap! Metal fixtures
for your lampshades!”

1903

First powered flight.

Kitty Hawk, Carolina.

After several attempts the Wright Brothers' flying machine succeeds in taking off for the first time.

"Flyer I" with Orville Wright at the controls manages to stay airborne for twelve seconds.



Hans Grohe works and works. He presses and stamps, yes, he himself, the owner, who's also manager, supplier, deliveryman on a bicycle, packer and bookkeeper all rolled into one. What had been hammered, bent and sanded into shape, measured and cut and pressed, had also to be packaged. Magdalene Grohe and her 12-year old daughter Lenchen (who was really called Helene, but answered to Lenele) stacked and wrapped and secured the finished items ready for despatch – but not before everything had been checked thoroughly. *"Nothing leaves this house unchecked!"* he would remind them regularly, when he mounted his trusty steed in search of customers – but mother and daughter knew that already.

Not just the finished goods, but also the basic principles to which Hansgrohe adheres to this day – these were the first stones laid, each one mighty stone on the next on the way to a big family business that was to survive wars and other crises.

Experiments, journeys, house building...

If you build a foundation, it must be built to last; nobody knew that better than Hans Grohe. He was one of the pioneers of his time, spending days and nights in his workshop, testing and experimenting with familiar and as yet unfamiliar materials, modelling, shaping, soldering and pondering. Before long he could leave his six workers to get on with things while he went on his travels. In 1906 he made his first longer such journeys to the Frankfurt Fair, then to Berlin.

They say in Swabia *"Schaffe, spare, Häusle baue!"* (*"Work hard, save hard, build your little house!"*), and so a house was built for the family in the Auestrasse, and *"my working day has sixteen hours!"*. So he was surprised when he learnt that Robert Bosch had introduced something revolutionary for his electrical works in Stuttgart: the 8-hour day. So he made sure that he would learn everything from him: *"... one day we must get that far!"*

The man from Brandenburg had long become more Swabian than the Swabians. Now he must find someone to do the bookkeeping, which he had done on his own, together with increasing amounts of business correspondence, right up to 1909. Those long journeys around the country were followed by more local ones – up and down the Kinzig and to all larger towns in Southern Germany. You could get everywhere by train, and even air travel was becoming less and less of a novelty. Hans Grohe travelled to Hamburg – the trains were getting much faster – and visited clients in Bremen. Contacts were built up in the Rhineland and Switzerland; goods delivered to Amsterdam by 1907; the following year he had his firm's first catalogue printed. *"There was always something we could earn; I had to get out into the world..."*

NOTHING LEAVES THIS HOUSE UNCHECKED!



Advert for the 1902
Kinzig Valley District Exhibition
in Gengenbach.

On June 14 1905 the firm is listed for the first time in the Trade Directory. Hans Grohe is registered as the sole proprietor.

NEVER TRAVEL
WITHOUT BRINGING
HOME NEW IDEAS.



1908: The first
catalogue appears.



From Schiltach into the wide world. 100 years ago Hans Grohe was already familiar with distant places.

Promising the earth

Stricter laws were passed in 1909 against unfair competition. Copying good products is no new thing, even those emanating from the Black Forest. Promising prospective customer the earth was not uncommon, but customers could distinguish honest information from the glib words of the competitors.

The little business flourished so well that they needed to move from retail to wholesale. So next to the family home in the Auestrasse a new building was erected in 1909 to house the factory, the stores and the despatch department.

And now, instead of the unreliable water power, the drive belts were now powered by electricity. “I had reliable power from morning till evening,” he remembered with satisfaction, “and we could get on with our work much better.” This Jack of all trades was now visiting Holland and Denmark, Switzerland and Italy, had nine employees, travelled to Prague and Vienna, made contacts in Hungary, and his correspondence went off to many countries every day. “Travelling was hard work ... Everywhere I was looking for customers. But no journey was made without bringing home new ideas. Everywhere I went I learnt something new,” he told his children.

Good times and bad

Hansgrohe found willing customers all around the world for what they produced in Schiltach. *“By 1913 we were one of the leading specialist suppliers of sanitary equipment,”* remembers the family.

Trade can help to get rid of old prejudices, and people begin to think about the world outside their own country. Or do they? Those same nations loved their

military parades, sabres were rattled, great speeches were held at home and abroad. It got darker in Germany and all around. On the eve of the First World War in 1914 the firm was employing 22 workers plus three people in the office – but when Germany declared war on France and Russia darkness descended: twelve of those workers were called to the front.

The metal presses on the ground floor of the new factory building in the Auestrasse, 1909.





Almost everything requisitioned

Not only that – what happens to the family when the breadwinner is taken away? Hans Grohe rents field and vegetable gardens, so that the workers and the families of those called up could at least have the necessary minimum in order to survive. Hunger stalked Germany, the newspapers spoke of a “swede winter” (meaning of course that very basic vegetable). The war had direct and indirect consequences; suddenly there were no more copper or brass reserves left, and the finished and half-finished products had been requisitioned. Hans Grohe discovered, necessity being the mother of invention, the advantages and disadvantages of the new materials that they had to turn to as substitutes, iron and zinc for example. A year before the end of the war the factory was required to produce war materials, mainly parts for detonators.

Hans Grohe’s son Johann, who had been born in Luckenwalde on December 14, 1895, and was called Hans like his father, was now Hans Junior. But like everyone else he had to take on an apprenticeship, and was sent to Stuttgart. On his 20th birthday the war was just over a year old, and the military needed everyone who could shoot. Never mind if the factory needed the Junior, he had to join up. Even the father, the self-disciplined civilian, had to become a soldier in 1917! “I often used to wonder what things would be like after the war,” he said. He would soon find out. When the war ended in defeat, he stood in front of empty shelves and empty order books.

The sure touch

Now was the time for imagination and skill! Hans Grohe had not only a great knowledge of his craft, not just great experience gained from practice, not just a direct line to his workers, but also a sure touch and a feeling for what was needed at the time. “Remember: you can’t clap with only one hand,” he would say to his 45 workers to encourage them to think of each other. But the country got ever poorer. By 1920 there was hardly a market for their goods. They had to go on the search for old clients. Were they still alive or had they perished in the War? And of course find new ones wherever they could. Export is the keyword: export, export!

So, again it meant: from Schiltach to Switzerland, then up the Rhine to Holland. Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland – and everywhere new clients, new friends were found, so many indeed that in 1921 the so-called Convent Mill (Klostermühle) in neighbouring Alpertsbach was purchased, which would house the brass-foundry and the lathes for turning the metal.

EXPORT IS THE KEYWORD: EXPORT, EXPORT!

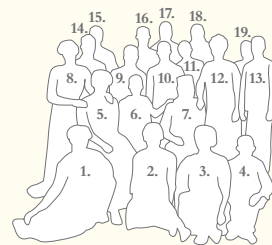


Photo opposite:
Family members and employees of
Hansgrohe in 1912, taken in front of the first
factory building in the Auestrasse,

1. Ms Niebel, née Katz (“Katze-Marie”)
2. Ms Bürkle-Braun
3. Sophie Esslinger, 4. Fritz Trautwein (“Green-Fritz”)
5. (unknown), 6. Friedrich Grohe
7. Mr Schöttle (father-in-law of Hans Grohe)
8. Helene Grohe (“Lenchen”, daughter of Hans Grohe)
9. Abraham Aberle, 10. Georg Trautwein
11. Eduard Springer, 12. Magdalene Grohe, née Schöttle
13. (unknown), 14. Julius Wöhrle (office and stores),
15. Mr Kirchner, 16. Hermann Mutschler
17. Mr Müller, 18. (unknown), 19. Fritz Dinger

BRANCH FACTORY IN ALPIRSBACH.



The Klostermühle, the Alpirsbach “branch”

* In parts of Southern Germany the Thursday in the week before Ash Wednesday is called “Glompiger Doschtig”, or “Dirty Thursday”. The title, however, has little to do with dirt; although another version, “Schmutziger Dunschtig”, seems to indicate that, “Schmutz” also meaning “dirt”. “Schmotz” is the Swabian-Allemanic word for fat, and this Thursday is celebrated with fatty foods – or so it’s claimed. (One might add that again the German is ahead of all the others; they all have to wait until Mardi Gras, the following Tuesday!)

Hansgrohe Maple Syrup Delight (“Gutsle”)

(enough for one baking-tray)

125 gr. Finely sieved wheat flour
25 gr. Finely sieved buckwheat
75 gr. Butter
75 gr. Almonds, finely ground
100 gr. Maple syrup
Peel of a 1 lemon
A drop of vanilla essence
1 pinch of salt.
Mix all together to form a soft dough
and form into croissants.
Bake for about 10 minutes at 180°C
Preparation: about 30 minutes.

The Junior takes over the Klostermühle
Many a summer and winter have passed. Overall responsibility for the firm’s branch in Alpirsbach is now in the hands of Hans Grohe, Junior. He has learnt his trade, firstly from his father, then in his apprenticeship in Stuttgart, attended the commercial college, worked in Schiltach from 1915 to 1918, and had been given no preferential treatment just because he was the boss’s son. And now, at just 28, he had a team of almost 40 workers under him whose job it was to produce outlet valves for washbasins, baths and sinks and to go through fire for their young boss!

Life after work

Rumour has it that the young ladies fled up the trees to get away from the attentions of the brothers Hans Junior and Friedrich. Today it is clear that sooner or later they came back down again...

In the Black Forest they know how to work, are as punctual as the cuckoos who appear every hour from the clocks they have made. On the other hand, in the region they know how to enjoy themselves after a hard day’s work. The Alemannic Fasnet, for example. The Junior put a brave face on it, but there was not a single morning between “Glompiger Doschtig*” and Ash Wednesday (yuck!) when he was not on the dot (oh, for crying out loud!) at his place of work. And anyway, Fasnet is part of the local culture, but *“eight children don’t get something from nothing, you know.”*

Being a little out from under the father’s gaze had its advantages. People worked where they lived, but if the Senior called, the nine kilometres to Schiltach were soon covered: by train, by motorbike, even if need be on horseback. One or other of the boss’s three daughters could be “given due attention” in Schiltach on a Sunday. True, Sunday was a holy day, but not that holy...

At Hansgrohe everyone had to work, even the children now and again. If the younger ones weren’t as keen as the older ones, they heard the ominous words *“If you don’t behave yourselves, you’ll find yourselves in the polishing-shop!”* It was there that everything, but everything, that left the factory was given a good polish with fast revolving cotton waste and made spick and span for despatch.

Goodies and cigarette-ends

On Sundays they didn’t just give the girls due attention or wait for the mail. Mathilde the Junior’s wife, made little Christmas goodies which the daughters gave to those who were unwilling workers in the factory: those condemned to forced labour or the conscientious objectors. They in their turn returned the compliment by giving the women wooden toys they had made themselves. In the darkest days they asked the women to collect cigarette-ends and give them the tobacco they thus collected – in secret, of course. This was in the Second World War –, but we are getting ahead of ourselves.

1922

Beach fashions, 1922.
Fashion Show in Florida.

*In the 20's a new,
more figure-hugging fashion
was beginning to find
general acceptance.*





Don't give a damn about privileges!

The bosses set no store in privileges: *"they only tempt you to rest on your laurels."* Whether for Hans or later Klaus or the sons and daughters, there was only one way into the factory for bosses and workers alike: through the machine rooms. They all could be talked to at any time, and *"there you get an insight as to where the problems are, where processes could be made safer, where someone might be worried about something,"* as Klaus Grohe knows to this day. It could be that one day a female employee ran sobbing into the boss's office, choked with tears, to tell him: *"Boss, I've got into trouble"*, which meant nothing less than that she was pregnant. The boyfriend had possibly made himself scarce or denied that he was the father; the little rubber protectors weren't so easy to come by as they are today. The boss, senior or junior, could surely be trusted to find a way forward, including reading the father the riot act.

In the next five years or so the workforce doubled in strength. In 1927 the export side of things alone brought in 238,000 Reichsmark. Hans Grohe Senior wrote: *"It's clear: people want our products!"*

Legends

The works were bursting at the seams, so in 1928 a new building was added. There the newest product, hand-held showers with a porcelain handle, had its premiere. They became a Hansgrohe legend.

"People who stay at home die at home!" is an old Swabian saying. Friedrich Grohe,

born in Schiltach in 1904, had been to school there and in Ettenheim and Calw, but now for him too it was time to move out and on. But before that the young man, now 25, knew that he had to get stuck in at the family business. In that year, 1929, a completely new technique of brass founding was introduced, and a new workshop was built a little way along the Kinzig to accommodate the new machinery.

By 1930 the production had so grown that Hans Grohe needed a car. It had belonged to the old doctor in Schiltach, and after rebuilding into a delivery van, it was used to get the goods to the railway station. It was known locally as the "Dahlgutsch" ("Valley Coach").

In loyalty to the Republic

Life could be good in the Republic, as Germany now was – but not for everybody. Hans Grohe had learnt the hard way in Luckenwalde; he knew what hunger and deprivation meant. Without freedom of the individual, without social responsibility, the country would go down the drain: that was the message of the German Democratic Party in the Weimar Republic. Hans Grohe involved himself in the struggle for a synthesis of liberal and social thought as a member of the GDP. Walther Rathenau and Albert Einstein, Friedrich Naumann and Theodor Heuss, Thomas Dehler and Reinhold Maier, who later became Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg, were his companions in the struggle. "In loyalty to the Republic!"

PEOPLE WANT OUR PRODUCTS!



Georg Engelmann
was the first export salesman employed
by Hansgrohe. He travelled widely,
from Scandinavia to North Africa, and
with his help the firm's exports
expanded enormously. In 1929, suffering
deep homesickness, he wrote
to his wife from Cairo: *"Although it is
beautiful here, I'd rather be
a cowhand for a farmer back home than
be trying to sell things here."*

Opposite page:
Hans Grohe with his sons: Hans Junior
at the controls, Friedrich riding pillion.

*The continued growth of the business
demanded ever more space.
In 1927 there were already 90 workers involved in the
manufacturing side and six in the office.*

*In 1928 the new factory building was built on
Schiltach Meadow. A novelty for the
time were the two elevators that connected the three
storeys of the building.*

*Photographs of the production
and despatch departments.*



*The firm also
grew financially:*

*1913
Net result:
100,000 Reichsmark*

*1924
Export sales:
148,000 Reichsmark*

*1927
Export sales:
238,000 Reichsmark*

*1930
Export sales:
507,000 Reichsmark*

*1938
Annual turnover:
1,900,000 Reichsmark*





The "Dahlgutsch", one of the earliest motor vehicles in the Kinzig valley, soon familiar to all. It was bought second-hand from the local doctor in 1930 and converted into a delivery vehicle. It was mainly used to take finished products to the railway station for despatch.



1928: Premiere of a successful product – the hand-held shower with a white porcelain handle.



This was produced in eight versions, for example:

*– with spout for rubber hose:
4 Mark*

*– with connection for metal hose:
4,20 Mark*

*– and the more solid model with octagonal porcelain handle and support ring:
5,40 Mark*

1928

*Airship LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin
is the "star" from the
House of Zeppelin, put into
commission on September 18, 1928.*

*LZ 127 was regarded
as the most successful passenger
airship of its time.*



When, however, the nationalistic banners were raised in 1933, against all reason, the House of Hans Grohe had friends all over the world. But would they remain good friends in the years to follow?

A thousand showers

In 1934 Friedrich Grohe departed from the family firm of Hansgrohe and two years later set up his own firm in Westphalia. Things had been getting tense between him and his father; the old saying that *"little birds chirp like the older ones"* did not apply here! Friedrich tried to talk his father into giving up, but the older man just laughed in his face. By the time Friedrich left, the firm in Schiltach was producing thousands and thousands of showers and hand showers.

The stork brought Hans Grohe's third marriage a son. On April 3, 1937 little Klaus Grohe was born. And the proud mama? She is the daughter of the Herr Wolber, owner of the Schiltach Brewery. Cheers!

The wrong music

By 1939 Hans Grohe had spent some considerable time in Aachen, a town where he had learnt a lot and one that he loved. But in the spring, homesickness took hold of him. *"It's not much fun here any more,"* he wrote. In a letter home dated April 25, 1939 he wrote:

"We are earning a lot of money, but the taxman takes so much of it. In this year alone, that's more than a cloth-weaver used to turn over with 20 to 30 looms ... It's like being X-rayed

through and through ... Wherever you listen, people have no desire to work hard ... There aren't employers and employees any more, just managers and followers. And they all have a say in everything ... On Thursday it was the Führer's birthday. OK, celebrate it – but all day???"

And he goes on with his complaint that such a pampered workforce had spread the silt from the nickel-plating process out to dry in the yard, and then, out of sheer laziness, let the whole mess run away into the river. *"Five hundredweight of trout were killed by the poison. It was scandalous!"* Hans advised the recipient of the letter to handle the letter confidentially; *"I have already crossed out one sentence."* He knew what would be in store for him if the censors got hold of the letter. But he was the sort of man who could not help speaking his mind. And now, in a horrid reprise of the old martial music of the First World War, the new march music was added – the wrong music ringing in the War years again.

FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

National? Hansgrohe is international and open to the world

In 1933 the firm's catalogue is issued for the first time in several languages: German, English, French, Italian and Spanish

By 1934 foreign representatives were at work in several countries; now links were successfully made with North Africa, Palestine and Syria. The export trade was flourishing.

Automatic outlet and overflow systems, even for wash-stands, come on to the market.

Hansgrohe is now able to file internationally registered designs.

In 1934, after Friedrich's departure from the firm, Hans Grohe becomes a junior limited partner.



By 1937 the firm possesses lathes and hydraulic presses and punches, casting machines, three dozen electric motors and a lorry with a payload of three tonnes.

More than 20 representatives are now actively working abroad.

...WHEN ALL PEOPLE WANT TO DO IS SHOWER IN PEACE.



*In 1934 automatic outlet
and overflow systems are brought
on the market.*

*In 1938 the firm becomes a
Limited Partnership: Helene Grohe (Mathauser)
and Liesel Grohe (Herrmann/Seitz)
become Limited Partners, Hans Grohe (Senior)
and Hans Grohe (Junior) General Partners.*

*The new 1939 catalogue features
the adjustable (!)
GROH-shower No. 462.*

*Opposite page:
Hans with his youngest son: Klaus Grohe
first sees the light of day in 1937.*

The new war is a bitter blow for the firm. All the same: *"We carry 250 sanitary products in our programme, each of them in ten variations or sizes, making a total of about 3,000 items!!"*

Once more, just as in the First World War, copper and brass have to be replaced by other materials. Once more it is possible to make the best of a bad thing, this time with aluminium alloys, iron, zinc, and the newly developed synthetic resin, bakelite. And yet once more, war materials must be produced instead of peaceful things, when all that people want to do is shower in peace, isn't it?

Death to the tyrants!

Hans Grohe wanted to produce, to trade, to buy and sell, things of peace. But the regime stood in the way, the regime he loathed and despised. *"If I could get my hands on Hitler, I would sacrifice my life and kill him,"* he said more than once to his closest friends. Dangerous talk indeed!

When in 1943 the rest of the copper and brass which Hans Grohe had wisely stocked up was seized. By then there were almost 500 employees, including forced labourers, aliens, prisoners of war. *"All of them were protected from being mishandled and were fed as best we could,"* was his recollection of those days.

The people in Alpirsbach as well managed to slip the prisoners something to eat: Anita (later Chini) and her sister Rosita (later Steurer) were not so noticeable to

the overseers with their little parcels from Alpirsbach, which their mother had prepared for them. Little treats at festival times.

Risking one's neck

On June 6, 1944 the liberation of Europe by allied forces began with the Normandy landings. Six weeks later, on July 20, members of the German Resistance paid for their attempt on Hitler's life with their own. Hans Grohe was well informed as to what was going on; as a sworn opponent of the National Socialists he kept in touch with events through a source free from the control of the Reich Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels: Radio London (BBC German Service).

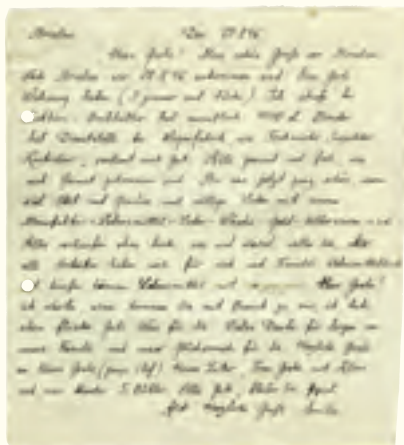
Listening to these broadcasts, which had to be done in secret, was illegal and dangerous; but Hans Grohe again could not keep silent: *"Hitler's power will soon be over."* On October 9, 1944, at the annual Sunday to celebrate the consecration of the church, he risked his neck by declaring that it would have been far better if Hitler had remained an apprentice painter.



THE SURVIVORS THANK THE “BOSS MAN”.



After the Second World War broke out,
the firm must once again go
over to the production of war materials.
Again it was explosive warheads.
From 1941 women in Schiltach and
foreign workers were condemned
to forced labour.



Greetings from Breslau.

Difficult times

May 8, 1945. A lost war, total collapse, liberation. Difficult times. Hans Grohe receives letters – from Poland, from Spain, from the Soviet Union, from France – all from survivors of the war. For them it was “thanks to the ‘boss man’.” Bravery? Courage? Human kindness. All around there were traces of these.

On May 14, 1946, his 75th birthday, Hans Grohe is still enviably fit. He would have loved to avoid the congratulations, “*but the weather is as bad as the economic situation,*” as he noted for then, so he stayed at home and pondered the future.

Post from abroad

On August 22, 1946, he receives a letter from Emilie, with “*my best greetings from Breslau.*” She had been one of those many who had been forcibly removed from their homes to work in German firms. Now safely back home in Poland from her time in Schiltach, she wants, as so many others did, to thank the Grohe family for their kindness in doing what they could to care for those so far away from their homes. Emilie wishes to return the favour and writes: “*I wait until you come with family to visit me here, I have good bottle wine for you. Thank you much for your care.*”

In September 1946, the Senior replies: “*I am very glad that you are keeping back a bottle of good wine for me. But I cannot now think of making the journey. When I was younger I thought nothing of travelling from Stuttgart via Dresden to Breslau; I could do it without even changing trains ... All of us*

here send our warmest greetings, Hans Grohe Junior, Herr Tobias Bühler, Frau Grohe and Klaus.”

Monopoly and the Treasures of the Black Forest

Schiltach is thinking of the new beginning, but the French forces of occupation have other ideas. They requisition the 60 most vital machines – half of the total machinery – and on top of that, there are no raw materials to be had! Is this the beginning of the end? Is there anything one could depend on? In these years it was the treasures deep in the Black Forest: of trust and confidence, knowledge and a lead in know-how. Even when material was short everywhere you looked – they had grown in the past through improvisation, invention, in problem-solving, those Hansgrohe folk! And the town knew this and trusted them, hundreds of families depended on them, people that Hans had provided with work and the means to earn their daily bread.

Monsieur le Colonel Faure receives New Year greetings

“*Dear Colonel Faure, We send you herewith the lists and hope that this is in order. However, we would request that no further machines be taken away from us ... If they are allowed to remain here, we can produce 1000 water taps a day ...*”

That was on December 11, 1947, an opportunity to send at the same time best wishes for the impending New Year: “*Our wish is that there be no more war and that Western Europe is once more whole and*

united.” Herr Grohe did not forget to invite the Colonel and his secretary to a friendly get-together, to drink coffee with one another. *“We are expecting some from America, and I am sure we could find a little schnapps, too.”* Tempting, indeed!

And so it came to pass that the enemy of recent times and the liberator of yesterday took the first step into what was to become the economic miracle land, even if that was unintentional. The French seized the (old) machines, but Clever Hans also knew that sooner or later he would have to obtain the newest and most modern tools and machines, come what may! Don’t bellyache, get stuck in: that had always been the motto of the family firm

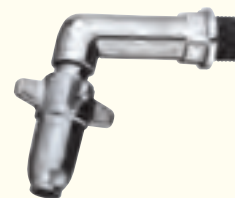
Into the woods ...

However: while manufacturers in the other Zones of Occupation did not lack for materials, in the French Zone every import of copper and brass remained forbidden. A tragic situation! The others could serve their customers, but they had to manage with substitute materials. Hans Grohe produced washing utensils, taps, cooking pots and aluminium kitchenware. In a letter to his brother he wrote:

“I’m glad that the Hitler regime is over ... The business is still intact; but we are working at best a three day week because of the shortage of power, with only 70 to 80 people. We are selling next to nothing.” Five people were regularly sent into the woods to find kindling for cold days.

Cleverness and self-help

With proverbial cleverness the almost impossible is achieved: production continues, and even new items are produced. A wall-mounted tap made of cast zinc, chromium-plated, is produced in huge quantities, a washing-press developed (a good selling line), aluminium taps with rubber washers all come on to the market; and in these barren years even key-chains, bracelets and necklaces, watch-chains and dog chains: Wow!



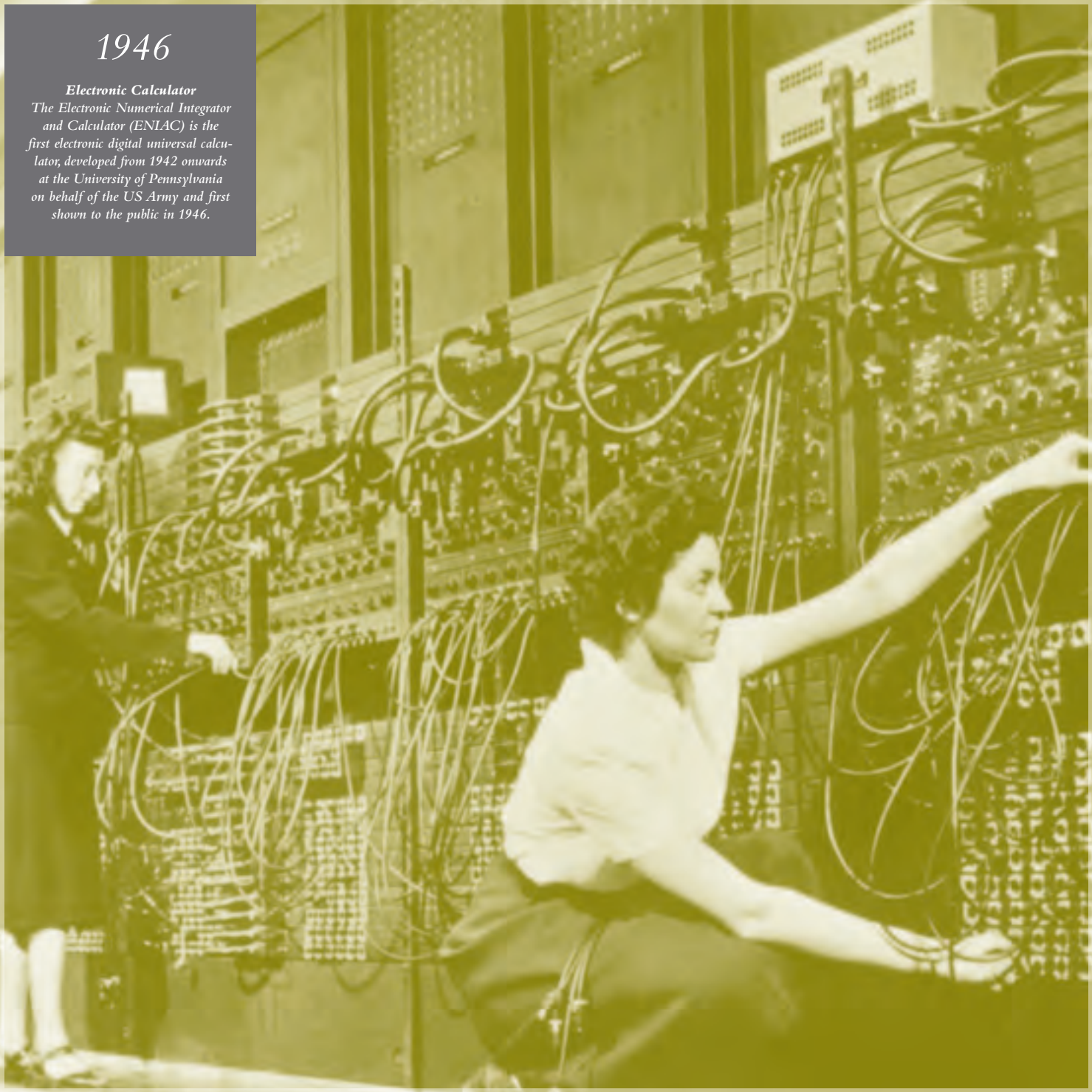
In the French Zone every import of copper and brass remained forbidden. So alternative materials were used in production: pots, cups, plates, dishes, ladles, scrapers – all aluminium! And a water tap in cast zinc.



1946

Electronic Calculator

The Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator (ENIAC) is the first electronic digital universal calculator, developed from 1942 onwards at the University of Pennsylvania on behalf of the US Army and first shown to the public in 1946.



Klaus Grohe hatches plans for his future

On July 9, 1946 Hans Grohe writes to his brother Wilhelm to thank him for his birthday wishes and brings him up to date with developments in the firm and the family: *"Now we have about 100 people working for us ... And I have hopes that in a few years things will start improving further. I am glad that the Hitler regime is a thing of the past; I cursed them and the lies in the German newspapers often enough."* Besides details about the firm there was news about the family: *"At the moment things are OK. The youngest, Klaus, is as slovenly as it comes and spends the whole day hanging around outside. Otherwise he's a good and honest lad. Already (at 9 years old!) he's saying that one day he wants to take over the business."*

On March 18, 1947 The boss sends his sister Minna *"100 Reichsmark and a few necklaces and taps made by us – perhaps you can get something for them."*

The lazy devil?

Because raw materials were still in very short supply there was plenty of time for letter-writing, for passing on news and asking after relatives and friends. So Hans could write on May 30, 1947 to his niece Hedwig:

"I am still well, as is the whole family. Your letter to Klaus, the lazy devil, has also arrived safely. Next autumn he's got to go away to school; we don't like to let him go, but he's going to pot here ..."

The lazy devil? As an old proverb puts it, *"old dogs learn no new tricks"*: what you don't learn as a child you'll never learn as an adult. You must be joking! Klaus Grohe's energy and enthusiasm for work are legendary!

And the old man reports to his relatives that "with Hans" (the Junior born back in Luckenwalde days) *"everything is fine, too. He comes here regularly three or four times a week. You know that he now has a large family of six children ... In the business things are still very slow; there is still not enough work to go round. We have a lot of holidays and festivals, catholic and protestant; they're always observed on the dot ... Food is still very short ... We are producing a very nice water-tap, and I'm sending you two by post for your birthday ... Yesterday I heard reports from England that in July the worst should be over. I can't believe that yet ..."*

PAST THE WORST?



*Klaus Grohe and his parents
on the day of his confirmation in 1951.*

DON'T GET STUCK IN A RUT!



A modest programme: Stick it out until the currency reform comes!



Now things can be got moving again – not only in the galvanising department (upper picture opposite). At the start of the 50's the annual turnover reaches 3.7 million Deutsche Mark. Rotary showers and equipment for bathwater heaters are featured in the new catalogue, and now, six years after that dreadful war, they can really let their hair down: almost 250 employees celebrate Hansgrohe's half-century.

Bartering instead of starving

Now there were still only 100 men on board – but it would have been ridiculous not to have stuck it out until the currency reform, whatever the cost! People had to barter rather than starve (meaning by barter the practice of getting scarce items of food, especially from local farmers, and other things needed, usually in exchange for other goods). So at Hansgrohe it was logical to produce aluminium pots and pans which they could use in this process of barter. And there were the flints they had used in the war production of detonators – just the thing for the peaceful cigarette lighter.

In Württemberg's schools they had to learn French and citizenship – new subjects for an old country. 30 million people had been uprooted, almost 3 million homes destroyed. In 1946 Volkswagen started up mass production again; 60 per cent of all the people in the world are illiterate; and Klaus Grohe reads Erich Kästner's novel "The Flying Classroom".

Those who shit their beds...

Meanwhile Hans Grohe was restarting the firm's international business. To his grandson Heinz Mathauser in Austria he passes on Friedrich Schiller's words of wisdom: "That's the way it is today," he reminds him, "and those that don't like it should stay at home and shit their beds. Schiltach, June 9, 1948."

*The flower must wither,
But the fruit must grow.
A man must go forth
Into hostile territory,
Must struggle and strive,
And plant and toil,
Be cunning and crafty,
Must wager and venture,
To find his happiness.
And then streams in the unending gift
And fills the store with priceless treasure.*
Friedrich Schiller.

And he sends other pearls of wisdom to Vienna: "My life as a journeyman was very hard; one always had to find the right words. I did it gladly, because the end result filled me with pleasure, and I made hardly a single journey without bringing new ideas home... Everywhere I was able to make a good profit and I learnt something everywhere I went, so that by 1913 we were one of the best specialist firms... My working day was usually 15 to 16 hours long. When I got home I did my book-keeping and my correspondence. You see that you do the same!"

Hans Grohe adds the advice not to try and do everything yourself: "Look around you; get to know the people. Don't buy your raw material too cheaply... that's just plain daft. And don't get stuck in a rut!"





Don't get stuck in a rut, keep on starting out afresh – that applied to all of the Hans Grohe kids. Now it's the turn of the youngest, Klaus. After he had been having a good time in Schiltach, he is sent by the Senior to boarding school: the Birklehof in Ettenheim, which promised to *"improve young people in every way, educationally, socially and in the sphere of religion."* Independence, responsibility and the ability to get on with others were demanded; pupils should get to know their own strengths and weaknesses and practise respect for, and readiness to help, others. Acknowledging differences of opinion and the resolving of conflict are things that have to be learnt – sometimes the hard way.

From there Klaus Grohe went to the Upper School in Hausen im Wiesental, then to the Commercial College in Offenburg, and finally to Neuchâtel in Switzerland. Here, in the home town of Friedrich Dürrenmatt, the family would find a second home.

Inspiration for the future

Life was pleasant there. In the shadow of the Cantonal Observatory, Switzerland's guardian of the exact time, the town of Neuchâtel stood, of course, for Helvetic precision. Around the shores of the Lake the landscape is uniquely beautiful, and the thousand-year-old town is an inspiration for its citizens and visitors alike.

Klaus Grohe tells how even today this symbiosis of history and future, of traditional and modern, fascinates him. As

was the case in Schiltach, the citizens of Neuchâtel had rebelled in 1848 in favour of democracy and progress, and the inventors and devisors of the place could call on an experience reaching back centuries. In the Black Forest there were the first telephonic devices; in Neuchâtel, just to give one example, there was Pierre Jacquet-Droz (1721–1790), who built robots in the form of human beings. His son built robots who could play music and speak and write in Latin, French and Italian (German was a bit difficult for them). And Abraham-Louis Breguet, one of the most important watchmakers in history, was a native of Neuchâtel. His legacy left a deep impression, not only in respect of technology, but also of aesthetics. Architecture, industrial design, inventive spirit – this aura attracts Klaus Grohe to this day. The simple elegance, beauty and functionality of their products marks out the Schiltach family business and its worldwide subsidiary companies.

Roll of drums...

How quickly time flies! In 1883 the dermatology professor Dr. Oskar Lassar caused great excitement with his invention of the "people's shower bath." For the princely sum of 10 pfennigs visitors to the exhibition could enjoy a shower in his corrugated iron pavilion.

KLAUS, TOO, MUST BE OFF OUT.



Seven years after the end of the war Hansgrohe has its first stand at the Stuttgart Exhibition.

*Opposite page:
Klaus Grohe (centre) with friends.*

IT MUST BE PERFECT!



In 1953 Hans Grohe becomes junior Managing Director, the Unica adjustable shower rail goes into production, and Hans Grohe Senior receives the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic.

But the heyday of the hand-held shower didn't begin until 70 years later, with Hansgrohe and a small revolution: Hurr-rah, the adjustable shower-rail has arrived! In 1953 it goes into mass production under the proud name of Unica – and Unica gets the tills ringing merrily.

Lie in the bath without moving?

But sometimes the time seems almost to stand still. In August 1952 the boss has the idea of developing shower enclosures. *"We have a good selection of shower-heads now, we can easily produce the hooks and tubes, and nylon is now available in wonderful quality. I think that taking a bath is becoming less and less popular. What's the point of sitting or lying 20 to 30 minutes in the bath without moving? Showering, warm or cold, with jet or spray, is healthier and much more pleasant. Besides, people don't always have room for a bath. Luder (production manager) was very enthusiastic for my ideas, and one or two suites are already finished."*

Almost two years later, on April 1, 1954, he makes a note that *"on August 16, 1952 I wrote that we wanted to make shower enclosures."* He's annoyed that it took so long to transform ideas into reality, even if it was still very shortly after the war. *"They brought nothing to fruition and it took a lot of pressure before the first printed details could be sent out worldwide in March 1954."* At last!

The best is perfection

Nowadays, according to Klaus Grohe, the process of development from the first idea till going into production lasts just a year. But hold on a bit! When a new product

has gone through all the processes – it's been designed and tested, checked from top to bottom and left to right and sideways – there is always that more or less final question that asks: is that really everything? And the questioner is Klaus Grohe. For him almost nothing is good enough: *"It must be perfect,"* is his demand. And before it is, nothing gets the go-ahead from Klaus.

Goal! Goal! Goal! The miracle of Berne

In the Wankdorf Stadium in Berne, victory in the final goes to the German boys. They become World Champions and take a shower after the match. Under the shower are, among others, Fritz Walter, Sepp Herberger and Uwe Rahn. Marilyn Monroe becomes a Hollywood star, and the 17-year-old Klaus Grohe is interested in both, football and Marilyn. His brother Hans (the Junior) is now 58 and becomes Managing Director.

Klaus builds a house ...

Klaus Grohe, although by now a limited partner, must wait until he is 25 before he can "come really into the firm". That's what the Senior had laid down in his will and testament. So that means more study, learning, study. How well he used his time, whatever some reports might say, is proven by his success. He wasn't given special treatment, whether in boarding school or upper school or commercial college. He obtains diplomas and readerships, spends one year in the USA, studies in Offenburg and Stuttgart. And on the side, as it were, the young man builds himself his first house on Formentera. He builds it himself, and it's still standing.



1956

Elvis – King of Rock ‘n’ Roll

*His music and his gyrating
hips attract thousands
of enthusiastic fans. In this year
he has one of his
huge successes with the hit
“Heartbreak Hotel.”*



...But earlier Klaus gets a stern warning

Even in 1942 Hans had to write stern words to his son Klaus, who had written from Offenburg that his money was running out and that he still needed shirts, underpants and socks. *"I can buy mouth-wash and scrubbing brush myself."* Klaus Grohe received 150 DM, *"but that was quickly used up"* among other things for *"a pair of long socks, pure wool, 11.50 DM, brown worsted trousers, 49.50 DM, and a sports jacket with brown and white stripes, 83.50 DM, pocket money 5 DM."*

So that left exactly 50 Pf for him to account for to his father! Father took pity on him and sent him another 20 DM – *"that should last you till you come home, and if you want to go to the fair, then that's OK."*

In 1954 he wrote to his son tersely: *"I'd rather you didn't come home next Sunday; you only just hang around doing nothing."* He recommended to spend the Sunday in study. Klaus was 17 – he pooh-poohed the idea of coaching and came home to Schiltach all the same. For that his pocket money was reduced the next time.

A helmsman disembarks

Hans Grohe Senior remained active right into a ripe old age, and kept his eye on everything. When he "disembarked" at the age of 84 on July 23, 1955 the whole of the Kinzig Valley joined in the mourning with the family, the employees and with friends all over the world at the loss of a great personality. *"He was one of us,"* they say.

The worldwide family business

Life at Hansgrohe carried on as before. Why should it be any different with the 18-year-old Klaus than with his brothers and sisters before him? In October 1955 he became junior partner in the firm, which now took great strides towards what could be called a worldwide business.

For the first time their goods were exported to the USA, and the most important and novel products of the firm were exhibited at the great Trade Fairs in Barcelona and Paris, even at the Brussels World Exhibition in 1957. The business could proudly show its face to insiders and outsiders alike. Hans can.

Sputnik and Goggomobil

The doors are always open at Hansgrohe, but on the Open Day in 1958 they were especially wide open. Workers and their families share in a great firm's party in Schiltach – the Federal Republic was celebrating the "economic miracle", the Russians send off the "Sputnik" satellite into space, and the BMW Isetta costs 3,980 DM, a good-quality shower from Hansgrohe 100 DM, the NSU Prinz costs 3,749 DM, the Goggomobil 3,780 DM and the Fiat 500 is to be had for 3,470 DM. Interested, anyone?

A HELMSMAN DISEMBARKS.

*On July 23, 1955 the head
and founder of the firm Hans Grohe dies.*

*Three months later, in October 1955,
Klaus Grohe becomes junior partner. Friedrich and
Friedel Grohe follow in 1956.*

*On the way to becoming a world-wide
business. Hansgrohe products are exhibited at the
great Trade Fairs of Europe.*



AT HANSGROHE
THE DOORS
ARE ALWAYS OPEN.



"The Westphalians enjoyed being in Schiltach" was the headline in the Schwarzwälder Post, after over 2,000 employees of the two firms Hansgrohe and Friedrich Grohe, together with members of their families, celebrated a joint firms' party in Schiltach.





The Hansgrohe firm's family celebrates with popular international artists.



On the way to the Teheran Fair: after a journey of more than 1,000 kilometres through the desert, finally at their destination.

HERE COMES THE “WIRTSCHAFTS- WUNDER” (“ECONOMIC MIRACLE”)

The Purpose of Economics

The fathers of the so-called social market economy were convinced that freedom will reach its goal not only when the individual enjoys the right to freedom and the development of his creativity, but also when he or she show themselves responsible for the well-being of their fellow-beings and of the whole community.

Freedom and the sense of responsibility for others were the guiding principles of Hansgrohe's business ethics.

*On the way forward: in 1958
the firm's turnover reaches 12 Million DM.*

*On September 28, 1960,
Hans Grohe Junior dies.*

*The Limited partners of Hansgrohe Co. Ltd.
are all descendants of the firm's founder:
Klaus Grohe (at this time a junior partner)
Friedrich Grohe and the husband of Helene Grohe,
Heinz Mathauer, the “Alpirsbach branch”:
with Anita Chini(-Grohe), Isa(bella) Diem(-Grohe),
Rita Frey(-Grohe), Roswitha Steurer(-Grohe),
Johannes Grohe and Dieter Grohe,
and finally the “Seitz branch”:
Elisabeth Michelotti and Gertrud Hellfritz,
the children of Liesel Grohe.*

*Opposite page:
The Shah of Persia and the Minister for
Economic Affairs, Ludwig Erhard at
the joint stand of Hansgrohe and Friedrich Grohe.
Teheran, 1960.*

Look at this country...

...And remember. Wasn't the history of the Federal Republic a bit like that of Hansgrohe? After the defeat in the War, a shortage of everything from economic infrastructure to raw materials, a shrunken market, hunger and the dismantling of industries. Refugees, people bombed out of their homes, deportees, the missing. The currency worthless, laws by decree of the occupying powers, CARE parcels from America; then the Marshall Plan, currency reform and the Deutschemark.

It's 1949. Ludwig Erhard is Minister for Economic Affairs and develops the concept of the social market economy. Freedom of the markets – but at the same time social equalisation: a principle that also applied at Hansgrohe. Economic freedom and technical progress were to lead to a high level of employment. Already futurologists worldwide were discussing the advantages of automation. What counted was performance and competition. But everyone has a responsibility, not only for himself, but for others, said Hans Grohe.

*Here comes the Wirtschaftswunder
We were down, but we didn't go under
(Who's for a beer and a quarter-pounder?)
Here comes the economic miracle
(Forgive me if I wax too lyrical)
The German belly is now much rounder
Pork chops in aspic taste better than before
That's no surprise seein' we lost the War.*

*freely adapted from a song of the time made
popular by Wolfgang Neuss*

Making the most of one's capital

The climate was favourable for investment. The country had a large reserve of well-qualified workers in those driven from their homes in the East, refugees from the GDR, and, from 1956 onwards, the first “guest workers”.

By 1960 German exports were almost five times those of ten years earlier, the gross national product had doubled, the German share of the world export market had gone up from six to ten percent. Finance and labour formed the capital that could be profitably made use of. All this favoured the introduction of the most modern technology, research and development.

Hansgrohe products celebrated success in the Trade Fairs of Lyons, Milan and Frankfurt, and Ludwig Erhard, Minister for Economic Affairs and architect of the social market economy, visited the firm's stand at the Teheran Fair as a matter of course.

But Hans Grohe Junior did not live to see all this success. He died unexpectedly at 65, just five years after his father. His heart gave up on September 28, 1960 – but it still beats in the firm to this day.



Achtung! In
das Bild et
eingespieg
rechts gebl

1965

*The first man in space.
Linked by a lifeline,
the American astronaut Edward
White leaves the
space capsule "Gemini IV"
and remains in space
for 20 minutes.*



Like the reconstruction, so the development of the country moves on apace, and the firm now goes through a time of change. It is above all Klaus Grohe who pushes this on. Very early on he gives a lot of thought to gaining the public's interest. No matter how good the product is, if the marketing is lacking, it won't sell well. In times of economic hardship, when raw materials are in short supply, you don't need marketing, as he observed – retailers as well as customers will tear the products out of your hands.

Build up, develop

Between the end of the Second World War and the founding of the Federal Republic in the West and the GDR in the East the foundations of the division of Germany were set in stone. As early as the 50's the GDR, supported by the Soviet Union, was preparing to seal off the East in order to stem the steady flow of its citizens to the West, which was reaching up to 200,000 people a year. When the Berlin Wall was erected on August 13, 1961, everybody in the country held their breath. Here it was the time of the Beatles, over there the time of the Puhdys – but also of brutal repression by the state. Here they could travel where they liked; the world was their oyster. There was the Stasi state, which spied on and imprisoned its own citizens.

The Russian space probe Luna 6 had already made a soft landing on the moon. Xerox was offering the first fax machines, and the "1968 generation", led by Rudi Dutschke (who also came from Lucken-

walde) was testing out the revolution, being met with water cannons. Hansgrohe had a more practical use for water: Selecta, the first-ever adjustable hand shower, was their revolution for the bathroom – well, almost.

And what about the social market economy? The recently acquired Schlossmühle mill was converted into workers' flats and housed the exhibitions department.

Swallowing or hiccups?

In life you have to swallow quite a few things, some easier to swallow, others harder. Often you don't find out which is which until you choke.

1968 – what a year that was! Unrest and change, missed opportunities for reform, stagnation in the country. Young Germans, with one eye on the USA, were asking uncomfortable questions and looking for new ways to live.

The spirit of Hans lives on today

In Schiltach they remain true to the family tradition and at the same time work for progress. No wonder with a motto such as this. Hans Grohe had invented the wheel of the family history, and that wheel is still turning today. That's the way to live; Klaus Grohe knows that things never stay the same, and that's the way he wants it. Above all, he is not content to be an onlooker, but a creator, a transformer, a man of action. "We have a chance to change the world," he insists; and we know that he also has the talents to make it happen.

WE HAVE A CHANCE TO CHANGE THE WORLD.



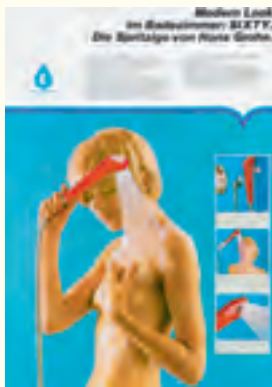
The importance of good presentation was clear to Klaus Grohe from the start. No matter how good the product, it will not sell well if the marketing is lacking.

On September 14, 1965, Richard Grohe is born. After a time as a scaffolder, then as a roofer and a landscape gardener, the first son of Klaus Grohe is put through the "Schiltach school" – learning the trade under his father, then into some of the firm's subsidiaries abroad. By 1994 he is a graduate in business management and becomes a junior departmental manager in the firm; in 1995 he becomes Managing Director of Hansgrohe Wasselonne and by 2003 leader of the Hansgrohe brand. In 2006 he becomes a member of the board of directors and in 2008 its Deputy Chairman. It was a rapid rise, but no corners were cut. The global players from the Black Forest don't work that way; and every one is recognised as "one of us".

TIME TO DO AWAY WITH A FEW TABOOS.



Names that made a successful career for themselves: Selecta, Metaflex, Unica and Aktiva are just the beginning of a long series of products that would conquer the world.



The Sixty shower set: Hansgrohe is the first enterprise in the sanitation sector to develop a product in cooperation with professional industrial designers.

The Prague Spring, hippies at Woodstock, Klaus Grohe in Schiltach

1968/69: The time for Klaus Grohe to take over as head of the business. But also to do away with a few taboos and turn this and that upside down, just like our Swabian Philosopher Friedrich Schlegel.

“There must be a reliable out-of-the-office team! Once the construction boom is over, which it will be sooner or later, our branch of business is going to meet problems. These we will master more easily if there is this outside team.” And so it was. Said Klaus Grohe: *“There’s another matter. Our products can easily be compared, even confused, with those of others. Except in the matter of quality. ‘You’ve got the better of them there’: that’s what our customers say.”*

Klaus Grohe gathers a large team around him, keeps them on their toes with encouragement and criticism, gets new structures put in place, and works to change the work atmosphere. He seems to hear the grass growing and listens to his customers, he’s apparently everywhere, whether expected or not, and presses onwards as one among equals, demolishing hierarchies and barriers to change – and just like his father, he has no time for privileges, even for himself.

In Schiltach they move into a highly modern new building with an open-plan office. Over the firm’s intercom every employee learns that Neil Armstrong has just set foot on the moon – the very first man to do so. Willy Brandt becomes Federal Chancellor and Klaus

Grohe gets full signing powers for the firm. And finally everyone here can see Sesame Street – in colour.

Did you say colour?

Now the bathroom gets it, too

Klaus Grohe rolls up his sleeves and gives many things a good shake-up. Both the function and the design of products must be right, he demands. *“Hansgrohe must be Number One – so let nobody think he can sit back and relax!”*

For a conservative branch of business all this, of course, at first met with a great deal of scepticism. But this was soon got over. *“They saw pretty quickly the advantages presented by attractive bathroom design. But our thoughts went further: and ours was the first firm in the sanitation sector to employ a full-time environmental expert.”*

In 1970 the world was amazed to see the first products in colour: showers in orange, black and white. Let’s have more of that, cried the retailers, and now let’s have a dance under the shower.

This harmony of art and technology, craftsmanship and design is a challenge for the firm. Design! Yes, but the manufactured shape of the product must function perfectly, the material used must be right. Mass-produced things for a demanding market? Yes, but they must express simplicity and beauty in their design, must fulfil their purpose; so the design must both be deceptively simple and functional. Baum-Design in Munich was the first to work closely with Hans-

grohe, but others, too, answered the call from Schiltach. Only the best in their fields will do.

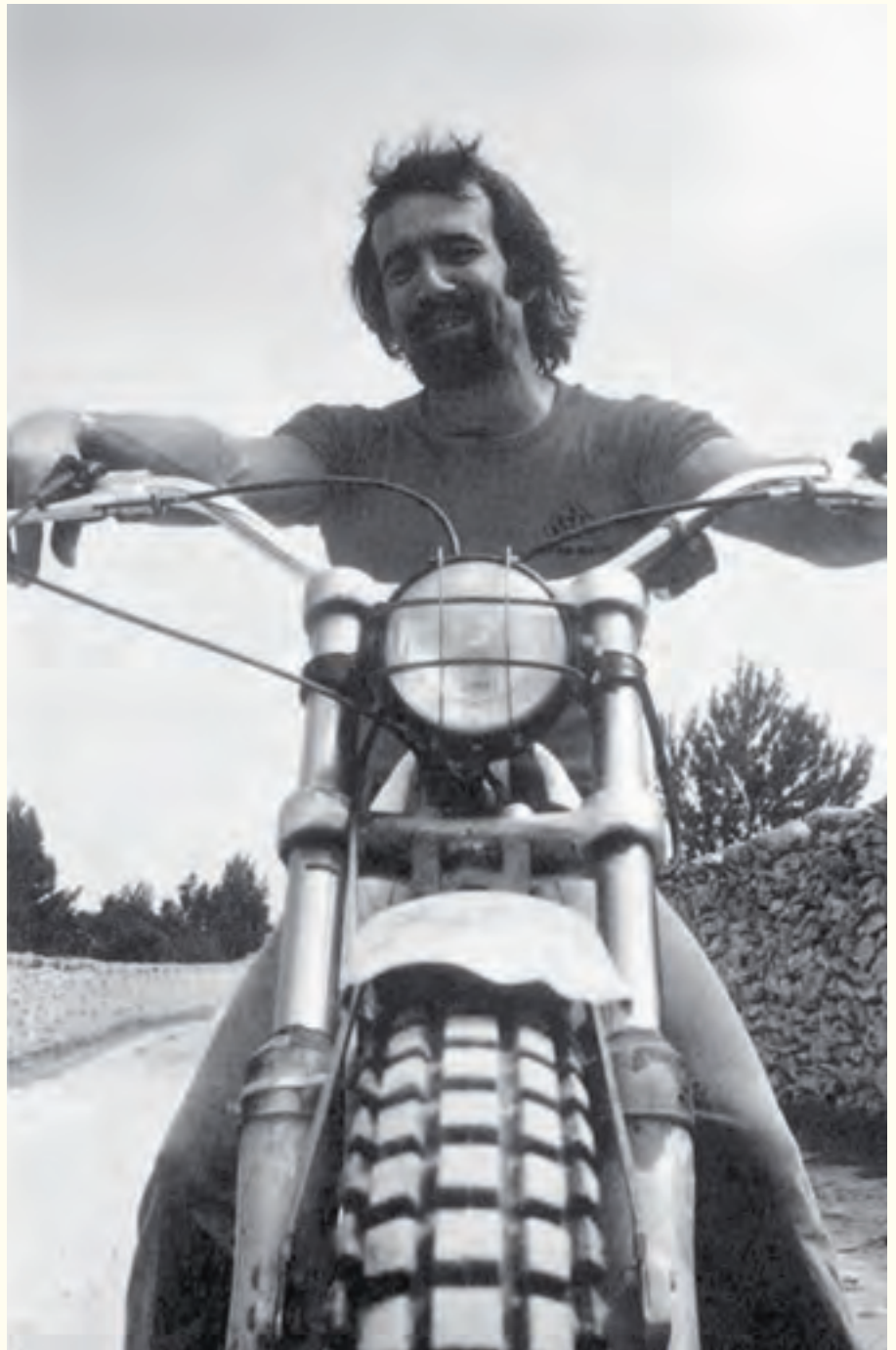
Doing the Marathon

Both are passionate runners. Klaus Grohe runs with Andreas Haug. Both are in their late 20's. So it's 40 km – or perhaps even 60? Cross-country skiing. Mountain biking. Decathlon. One is from Schiltach, the other from Altensteig. Tomorrow another 40 or 60 km. Klaus Grohe is ambitious. Challenging one's own body sharpens one's consciousness, wakes one up. On such outings in the fresh Black Forest air, out in the country, one develops a rhythm of one's own and sharpens the brain. He is like a round-the-world yachtsman who again and again needs the stormy winds, new horizons.

Few words. Intuition. Future projects. Clear directions. Attempt something new.

The designer Andreas Haug knows that those at the top often have little to do with the actual products – unfortunately. They just want to know what will sell well. But Klaus Grohe has other ideas. He wants to know how it operates. And how it can operate better, what it feels like in the hand, what use can be made of it. He wants to know about its appearance and what its effect is on people and the environment. He also wants to know how long it will last and whether it is worth the money.

*Klaus Grohe – one who like his father
has no time for privileges.*



THE WORLDWIDE NETWORK SPREADS FURTHER.

*By the end of 1966 the gross turnover reaches
35,000,000 DM.*

*Welcome Philippe Grohe!
Klaus Grohe's second son is born on
January 3, 1967.*

*After training as a photographer he studies
economics (international marketing), develops projects
at Delta Faucet in Indianapolis (USA) in 1996,
and ends up in Schiltach in 1997. The next
year he moves to France to become Managing Director
of the Hansgrohe subsidiary there.
Finally, laden with experience, energy and joie de vivre,
he return to headquarters to build up
the Corporate Marketing Department and
in 2001 becomes head of Axor.*



*Once more space is at a premium.
In order to make room for the increasing needs of the
production department in the main building
on the Aue, a 4,000 m² building is erected on land
adjoining Schiltach railway station.*

Klaus Grohe probes and probes and probes...

Even when it seems as if all questions have been satisfactorily answered, Klaus Grohe is still not satisfied. He wants to know everything for himself, have a good look, test and experiment. And so he is always suspicious of things that work out too easily, are too quickly rounded off and have no apparent snags or catches. He looks for contradictions and resistance. *"If this sense of excitement lets up, if all goes peaceful and quiet, that's when you've got to be extra careful,"* he says.

It's getting this thought process and these ways of working over to his people, motivating them, enthusing them, finding out those who have a flair for things: *"that he can do,"* is the general opinion. *"One should...? Perhaps one could...? Maybe one ought to...? Have a go! Take the risk! Look at the whole picture without losing a single detail!"*

Shortly after Hans Grohe senior went into raptures about shower enclosures made of nylon in the early 50's, his younger son was just 18, driving many a teacher to distraction, as the reports go – but one mustn't believe everything one reads here.

But he knew how to do up and tune motor cars (how many know how to today?) and drove them on more than just one or two rallies. Klaus Grohe was well aware of which bucket seats were particularly sexy, but also very practical, and which materials were best suited for the purpose. Smart lad!

In those days practically everyone in the sanitary trade used materials that were mostly pretty primitive: simple castings, poorly sprayed. Klaus Grohe had grown up with all this. But now, together with researchers and developers, he tinkered and experimented, looked with them for better methods and new, environmentally-friendly materials, so that, almost like in the decathlon, he left his competitors well behind him.

Hansgrohe is Klaus Grohe...

So in 1971 the business can present several innovations – an overhead shower and side showers, a shower-jet, new bathroom units, a mixer shower, a plastic washbasin outlet system, and so on...

"We must advertise more and more directly to sanitary engineers, wholesalers and architects," demands Klaus Grohe. And he didn't have to wait long for successful results. In 1972 a 4,000 m² building is erected on land adjoining Schiltach railway station. The old "Dahlgutsch" (the old delivery van conversion) had long ago served its time. Now a rail connection was right in front of the door. But not only the buildings are new – so are the products and materials out of plastic, of which in the first year alone in the new building 300 tons were processed.

In 1973 a marketing company was set up in Spain in cooperation with Eugenio Freire. The worldwide network spreads further.



In 1965 the old factory building and the family home of the Grohes must give way to a new main building on the Aue. This is built and equipped in three stages (1966, 1969 and 1986).

Friedrich Grohe in Hemer

Never trust the peace and put no faith in the future, they tell each other in the family.

51 % of the shares in the Hemer business are sold in 1968 to the US group ITT. When Friedrich Grohe dies in 1983, his heirs buy back these shares a year later.



1991 the business is put on to the stock market, but as soon as 1999 the shares of the families Grohe and Rost are taken over by Grohe Holding, held by a fund under the trusteeship of BC Partners. The family is no longer part of it.

In 2004 a consortium of investors from the Texas Pacific Group and CSFB Private Equity purchase all Grohe shares, and the Frankfurter Rundschau reports on June 9, 2005 that "Funds force redundancies at Grohe."

1974

The Volkswagen Golf

With the follow-up to the Beetle, VW creates a new class of motor vehicle. Designed by Giorgio Giugiaro, over 25 million models come off the production line, making the Golf the top selling motor car in Europe.



... and Germany wins the Football World Cup

The nation follows the game on television – almost certainly the only Sunday in that year when the new Hansgrohe Showermobile stays in the garage and is not out on the road demonstrating the new products to sanitary engineers and wholesalers. And they are working demonstrations, too – the vehicle is equipped with its own water and electricity supplies.

Design Champions

Hartmut Esslinger, Andreas Haug and Georg Sprenger from Esslinger Design (later frog design) are now sitting in the same boat as Hansgrohe, with Klaus Grohe at the helm. In 1974 they design together the first multispray hand shower with revolving head – and that in blue, red, brown or yellow. This is the Tribel, which is destined to become a real classic! These days Andreas Haug has joined together with Tom Schönherr to become Phoenix Design. These internationally acclaimed designers from Stuttgart became with the Tribel Hansgrohe's design and development partners with a simple but credible motto: Form follows Phoenix. Andreas Haug and Tom Schönherr have won among other awards the top European prize for design, the Lucky Strike Award.

The Tribel, developed by Haug in 1974, is the first Hansgrohe product to feature in the German section of the Stuttgart Design Centre. It is also the first in a long series of awards and prizes for design and innovation.

Beware of Spies!

Not only in the field of sanitation. Günter Guillaume, a personal assistant to Chancellor Willy Brandt, is arrested on suspicion of espionage for the GDR. Willy has to resign. Hansgrohe has nothing to hide. On the contrary: in 1974 a training centre is set up in the former cinema in Schiltach, in order to impart the knowhow to members of the trade, who are regarded as partners. And so the foundation stone of the later "Hansgrohe Aquademie" is laid.

THE BEGINNING OF A LONG SERIES...

Honour where it's due

Up to 2008 Hansgrohe has brought home more than 270 design awards since 1960, when as one of the first in the sanitary industry the firm began to build on cooperation with designers and look for "excellent shape" at the same time as operational quality.



The awards for the Tribel in 1974 started a long line of design awards won by Hansgrohe.



New models by Hansgrohe were brought to the attention of the public by means of a specially converted vehicle, the "Showermobile".

LIKE A DUCK TO WATER.

A bundle of joy

... was in prospect for Klaus Grohe when he celebrated the birth of his son Pierre-Nicholas on October 3, 1975. Less than two decades later the new member of the family completed an apprenticeship as a sanitary engineer; later he was to join the team as fourth in the family group in presenting fittings and showers to the public, above all on the American market, where today he is regional manager.



1976: 700 Hansgrohe employees, together with their families and the top echelons of the firm, celebrate the 75th anniversary of its foundation.

*Opposite page:
Klaus Grohe in his element with the Tribel –
takes to it like a duck to water.*

Sport is torture, showering a thing to be endured

Bathing and showering are not only good for getting one clean – that's something even the ancient Greeks knew, never mind the Romans. But now the Western European, with his keen sense of duty, was more interested in competition and hard work. Sport was looked upon as torture and taking a shower a thing to be got on with. But pleasure? Enjoyment? Relaxation? A healthy activity? Come off it! Taking a shower was looked upon as a luxury for the few!

In 1975, at the International Heating and Sanitation Exhibition, Hansgrohe presented its concept of "luxury for everyone": the first integral shower cubicle (Esslinger Design) with electronically-controlled fittings, automatic alternating hot and cold showers, massage and side showers, later on the hand-held Mistral with continuously adjustable needle and massage jets. Pleasure? One simply has to want it. It's all possible now.

In 1976 Hansgrohe's 700-strong workforce celebrated the 75th anniversary of the firm's foundation. The gross annual turnover had now reached 112 Million DM. Schiltach could be, and was, proud of itself.

Klaus in the house

In 1977 Klaus Grohe becomes sole manager of the firm. The turnover grows year by year. Like his father, the "new Hans Grohe" is fully aware of the importance of the export side of the business.

Now 40 per cent of production is exported to 50 countries round the world – and Hansgrohe is European Number One in showers.

When the mobile telephone was introduced in 1979 – remember those huge bricks, the lightest ones weighing 12 Kg? – and the CD first saw the light of day, there were now in Schiltach Hansgrohe two separate Works, I and II. Whether Lady Di. at the time of her wedding ordered a massage shower from Works I or Works II can no longer be determined, not even by the most modern IBM computer systems linking the two, regarded universally as the non plus ultra of such systems.

They say of Klaus Grohe that he has the sharpest of eyes. He employed them to best effect during his practical training, visits and traineeships in England and in Schiltach, in South Africa and in Hemer, in Stuttgart and in Ohio. On the side, so to speak, he almost completed a qualification in mechanics, studied in Bonn and Neuchâtel, and has never stopped studying. With a sheer unbelievable affinity for design on the one hand and on the other an unquenchable thirst for ways of making existing things better and improving their functionality, with no consideration of the time it might take him, he stays on the ball and remains captain of his team. In this he is in his element; he takes to it all like a duck to water. Please let's look back a moment.





On a wing and a prayer

The other side of the road from Hansgrohe in Schiltach, as it were, Heinrich Baumgartner runs a filling-station with a small repair workshop attached. After the war his father had made bicycle tyres out of old parachutes; now it is Heinrich's turn. And, when he can, Klaus, with his flair for mechanics, goes over and joins him.

Both are fascinated by top performance, speed, reliability – and what Heinrich Baumgartner builds together with Klaus Grohe are so reliable that they take part in rallies in them. Often enough it's Klaus Grohe at the wheel, Heinrich Baumgartner at his side mouthing a silent prayer. It was a sporting challenge to find out where one could make the car lighter, faster and safer. Bucket seats out of plastics were developed, wheels out of aluminium. To this very day Klaus Grohe's friend explains happily that all his life he had only one thing in mind: *"to make the lightest and strongest wheels in the world."*

Both seek the best solutions; they demand perfection. These two powerhouses of ideas have remained neighbours and both of them world champions. Nobody drives a Formula 1 racing car these days without BBS wheels from Schiltach.

Foundations for tomorrow and the day after

In Italy in 1981 Hansgrohe receives the Golden Hercules award for outstanding achievement. In the same year the firm introduces the first tap fittings with an operating handle instead of a knob and

with Quiclean a way of cleaning the shower on reuse.

In 1983 a major revolution appeared: the Internet. It was to put many a new development of modern times in the shade. What was originally developed in order to guarantee "uninterrupted communication" in the event of a war that everyone feared, what linked universities and researchers, first of all in the USA, experienced a meteoric growth. At the start of the 90's came the World Wide Web (www.). Now even Frau Müller from Schiltach could keep in constant and peaceful touch with Herr Maier from Luckenwalde through the Net, which grows and grows and grows.

Out and about

Again and again starting out for new shores, new goals, crossing frontiers – such travels had driven the founder of the business around the turn of the century. So a tradition evolved in the firm: the first Hansgrohe Works Outing in 1984 took this concept of "out and about" as a life-long motto for the firm. These days out take place almost every other year – to visit new factories, but also to walk through woods and fells. Need it be added that together with this good tradition the firm shows its appreciation and gratitude to the workforce when in some beer tent or local hostelry in the area a good quart of beer or cider is accompanied by a slap-up supper?

STARTING OUT FOR NEW SHORES.



With the first mixer series, named Allegro, a new era begins at Hansgrohe. This new washbasin fixture, with its revolutionary lever handle, is revealed to the professional sanitary market on the river ship Sirona.

*Opposite page:
At the ISH 1981 in Frankfurt
Hansgrohe presents its shower ranges,
consisting of coordinated overhead,
side and hand showers.*

SPACE IS RUNNING OUT ALONG THE KINZIG.



On the Hansgrohe stand at the ISH 1983 a world record in unbroken showering is set.

*Opposite page:
Two years later, at the ISH 1985,
Hansgrohe presents Uno, the first mixer
series specially designed for colour.
Designed by frogdesign, Uno even receives
a USA Design Award.*

*Change, but by no means decay
On January 1, 1985,
there's a change among the partners.*

*Friedrich Grohe's heirs and
the members of the Seitz branch sell their
shares to Masco, an American business
specialising in fitting out homes.
Klaus Grohe sees in these new partners
an excellent opportunity for a
further expansion of the business.*

Even though the world is at home on the Kinzig, in 1985, under the wonderful slogan of "Fire and Ice for the Uno" Hansgrohe takes 50 sanitary wholesalers and engineers on a visit to Iceland. In 1989 the Hansgrohe Express takes 960 employees and their families to the ISH in Frankfurt.

Travellers to the day after tomorrow

You remember? We told you earlier: time was, when the boss journeyed in person with his rucksack across and around the country – his luggage was pots and pans, direct marketing in those times of hardship. Now in 2010 the company has 37 subsidiaries in every continent; it has its own production centres in Schiltach, Offenburg and Alpirsbach in Germany, Alpharetta in the USA, Wasselonne in France, Wormerveer in the Netherlands and Shanghai in China. No matter where their products are made and sold, with their tradition reaching back more than a century the whole has been welded into one single unit by their craftsmanship, innovative technology and design: a success that keeps their competitors constantly on their toes.

A wobbly world

In 1989 Mikhail, the boss in Moscow, warns Erich, the boss in East Berlin: "If you leave things too long, you suffer for it later." But this time Erich, who up to now had believed every fairy story from Moscow, doesn't listen and does leave things too long. Spring breaks out everywhere, and authoritarian regimes begin to wobble.

Space is running out along the Kinzig

By 1989 Hansgrohe finds that there is just no more room for expansion in the upper Kinzig valley, so plans are made for a new factory costing 75 Million DM: Works III, in Offenburg-Elgersweier. Extra shifts are needed to keep up with demand; for the first time the workforce exceeds 1000; quality control gets its own laboratory. Now all that's needed, thank goodness, is the reunification of the country. Patience has its limits, but these finally give way under the pressure of millions of people.

Customer service personnel with 28 demonstration vehicles featuring Hansgrohe products in operation are now serving 13 countries. On the other side of the old East-West border there's a huge market waiting to be tapped.

New robots take over the heavy work in the polishing shop, and on April 6, 1990 the foundation stone for Works III is laid in Offenburg-Elgersweier. The next Hansgrohe works outing goes to visit the huge building site – 800 people in all!



1989

The opening of the Berlin Wall

Berliners dance on top of the Wall. On November 9 the GDR leadership opens all the border crossings to the West. Thus the first step is made towards the reunification of the two halves of Germany.



The sun smiles on ...

Whether it's Mesopotamia or ancient Egypt or the great cultural places of South America or the southern Black Forest: Welcome, sun!

It was in 1839 that Henri Becquerel discovered phosphorescence and natural radioactivity. Forty years later – Hans Grohe in Luckenwalde was just eight years old – Charles Fritts in New York built the first functioning solar cell. So at Hansgrohe one is very aware of how difficult it is to transform new ideas into practicality. Solar energy is just one example of this.

When they celebrated the completion of Works III in Offenburg in 1990, it was obvious that Hansgrohe was yet another step ahead of others: the roof of the new building was to have a giant photovoltaic installation. The sun smiles on – on politicians and environmentalists alike.

Klaus Grohe, who in 1990 also became Chairman of the Directors, says: *“climate change is not a matter for the distant future, it is present reality. Every section of society must play its part in reducing CO₂ emissions. That, by the way, is not just ecological sense, but it makes sound economical sense as well. We must set the course of the future today.”*

Environment writ large

In 1991 Hansgrohe sets new standards in the new Works III in Offenburg in the process of galvanised plastic. This environmentally-friendly surface treatment plant is one of the largest and most modern in Europe. The whole of the building

is heated from the waste heat of the production process. The machines are cooled by means of a water reservoir that at the same time serves as an energy store. On its inception the building, the most modern shower factory in Europe, was visited by hundreds of customers, business associates and colleagues from around the world, as well as 10,000 interested visitors.

Competitors, do likewise!

Also, because of the giant solar power source erected in 1993 on the roof of the building, by 2005 enough power is generated to heat and light 40 family homes – over 140,000 kWh per year. Thus 100 tons of CO₂ is saved every year. Competitors, do likewise!

EUROPE'S MOST MODERN SHOWER FACTORY.

*The Hansgrohe Works III and the
Hansgrohe Solar Tower in Offenburg-Elgersweier.*



AN “OSCAR” FOR THE SHOWER TEMPLE.



The “Shower Temple”, revealed at the ISH 1989, signals the move from wet-room to a complete unit with inbuilt blissful enjoyment.



To set a trend, sometimes one needs great staying power ...

As long ago as the 50's the older Hans was dreaming of a shower temple. Twenty years later the first prototypes were developed. But it wasn't until 1989 that the world first cast its eyes on one. My goodness! Visitors to the ISH couldn't believe their eyes! Even the Hansgrohe people themselves were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic reception it received. At the Batimat it straightway received the "Oscar" from the French interior designers – the first time, incidentally, that a German firm had won it.

... But it's not worth while chasing after every trend

At Hansgrohe they had learnt long ago that greed impoverishes. They knew, too, how to measure quality: DMAIC, which stands for define, measure, analyse, improve and control. They now improved on this with DMEDI, or define, measure, explore, develop, implement. This method was now employed in all new developments. And WILD? At Hansgrohe that stands for water, innovation, Leistung (performance) and design.

Hansgrohe: WILD at heart

This also characterises the working atmosphere. A good one is important, as previously had at least given lip service to. But that's not enough these days. Klaus Grohe feels responsible for the general atmosphere in the town and valley, and he is involved in improving the atmosphere in the country as a whole: *"Climate, when you look as well at worldwide*

catastrophes such as cyclones and hurricanes, melting ice and drought, has got something to do with the way we all treat one another and our planet. This sense of responsibility runs like a thread through our firm's history of more than a hundred years." A firm's culture as a part of a general responsibility which the businessman has for the whole of society: at Hansgrohe this culture involves art and sport and environment and safety at work as well as good design, quality and reliability. Social welfare benefits are just as much part of this as investment and productivity. Shared responsibility for the future means shared pleasure in new products – and in the financial rewards they bring.

Klaus Grohe knows that this only works in togetherness, in teamwork with all those who also have a care for the future. He is a faithful proponent of these principles.



*Going on outings together,
celebrating together, working together.
The Hansgrohe "Wandertage"
are a much-loved part of the firm's culture.*

FROM THE WET ROOM TO THE TEMPLE OF BLISS.



*In 1992 a new brand joins the Hansgrohe family:
Axor, registered worldwide as a trademark.*

Premiere in the Frankfurt Festival Hall

At the end of 1992 the Axor brand was established, and the great ISH in Frankfurt became more and more a magnet for the public. For the first time Hansgrohe exhibited in the Festival Hall there. At the two-level stand the Axor brand celebrated its premiere.

Eight completely installed “life-style bathrooms” demonstrated to the trade world this exemplary bathroom layout.

A new philosophy

“Making the bathroom into a place of peace and meditation, security and the development of personality in a fast-moving world”: that’s the way Philippe Grohe describes the new philosophy behind Axor. The bathroom – a private refuge. To achieve this means a lot of hard work.

But somehow, someday one returns to the simple things of life. Take the French designer Philippe Starck, for example: he traces the simple designs of his Hansgrohe bathrooms back to the bathtub, the bucket, and the hand pump! Simple, eh? Or just follow the recommendation to make a visit to the “Water-Bath-Design-Museum”. Since 1997 Hansgrohe has been exhibiting on the Aue at Schiltach its own history and the 700-year-old history of the bath. The part that Hansgrohe has played in this revolutionising of the development of the bath, the standard set by “Hans”, is quite simply amazing.

Never stint on beauty

Philippe Starck, the philosopher and design rebel, is one of the best known designers in the world. His work is varied indeed. From posh New York hotels to simple building plans for an inexpensive house costing less than 1,000 Euros by mail order; from hanging lamps to motorcycles, toothbrushes – and to Hansgrohe. Starck likes Hans.

“One can be proud of both old and young who have transformed the bathroom,” Klaus Grohe sums up, “transformed it from a soulless wet room to a temple of bliss. Remaining conscious of where we have come from gives us the spur to discover where we are going.”



With the Philippe Starck bathroom of 1994 an all-encompassing concept of space and fittings was presented for the very first time. With its almost archaic form it caught the mood of the time.



*Philippe Starck likes Hans.
In a more than 15-year history of collaboration with Axor and Philippe Grohe he has developed the bathroom collections Axor Starck Classic, Axor Starck and Axor Starck X.*

TOWARDS THE ENVIRONMENT, THE SUN AND THE FUTURE.

*The word photovoltaic is an
amalgam of the Greek word for light and the name
of the physicist Alessandro Volta.
It denotes the direct conversion of sunlight into
electrical energy by means of solar cells.
The conversion process is a direct consequence of
Alexander Bequerel's discovery of the
photo effect back in 1839. By photo effect is
meant the release of the carriers of
positive and negative charges in a solid body by
the irradiation of sunlight.*

*For environmentally conscious business
leadership Hansgrohe was awarded as the first business
enterprise the Environment Prize of the
Land of Baden-Württemberg in 1995. Two years later
the Federal Minister for Construction congratulated
the firm for "magnificent initiatives in the
application of solar energy and environmental balance".
In 1998 these awards are followed by the
Industrial Medal of the Land of Baden-Württemberg
and praise for comprehensive ecological activity.*

*Opposite page:
The Hansgrohe Solar Tower, symbol
of the firm's ecological strategy.*

Fine dust and residual dust

In 1993 a new extractor system is installed in the foundry and the automatic lathe shop. Air is extracted directly from inside the machines and 99.9% of all harmful chemicals filtered out. The residual dust is hardly measurable; the purified air is released into the atmosphere.

The Far East has just got much nearer

1993: Hansgrohe in China. The crush at the Canton Exhibition that year is so enormous that from time to time the Hansgrohe stand has to be closed because of overcrowding. In Teheran, too, the firm is a pioneer – in fact the only exhibitor – in the sanitation sector. Added to these, hardly a single important trade fair is left out all around the world: Bangkok, Sydney, Dubai, Cairo, Beirut, Santiago de Chile, Guadalajara and Guatemala City.

Wall to wall sunshine

As planned, in 1993 work began on what was then the largest solar power station on the roof of Works III in Offenburg. The modern photovoltaic plant promised an annual yield of 80,000 Kilowatt hours a year. Then in 1994 another construction astounded architects, owners and public alike: in the grounds of the Offenburg Works a solar panel measuring 55 square metres, revolving with the sun's movement, was erected on a 22 metre high solar tower, integrated with the roof-mounted photovoltaic plant on the works building itself. The direction is clear: move around to the environment, the sun, the future.

Reunion everywhere

In the 90's the broadcasting station RIAS, rich in history and tradition, becomes Deutschlandradio. The (West German) Bundesbahn and the (East German) Reichsbahn amalgamate to form German Railways (Deutsche Bahn). The number of unemployed reaches over 4 million; and 64 countries unite to ban the export of toxic waste from the industrial nations to the developing ones.

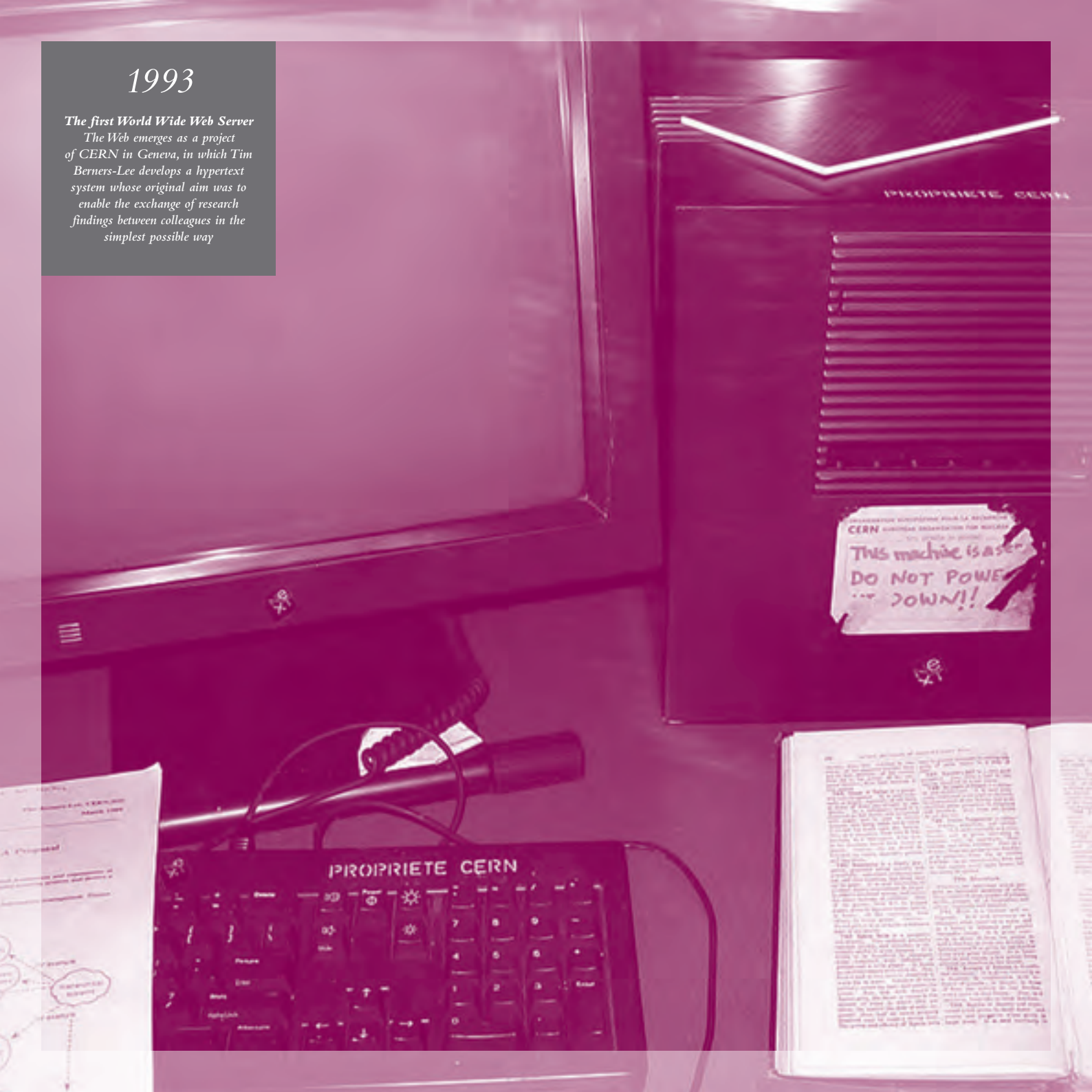
The Channel Tunnel links Britain and France; Nelson Mandela becomes President of South Africa; and in 1994, 49 years after the end of the war, the Russians finally go back home. Do svidania, auf Wiedersehen, au revoir – or no, perhaps better not.



1993

The first World Wide Web Server

The Web emerges as a project of CERN in Geneva, in which Tim Berners-Lee develops a hypertext system whose original aim was to enable the exchange of research findings between colleagues in the simplest possible way



Pioneering work among the former Pioneers

In the years following German reunification Klaus Grohe takes great pains to see that the company runs in an uncomplicated and speedy way, so that sensible standards are introduced in the former (East German) state of the Trabi and Stasi. So everything now is “keep prices low!” and “get a move on!” The Hansgrohe representatives in the field, kept on their toes, now learn to do without in a land where people have had to do without for almost forty years. If there are no hotel beds to be had at the Leipzig Fair, then find a family to stay with – and when even that’s not possible, then sleep in your vehicle! Main thing: you are there!

It’s Klaus Grohe’s way to think ten years in advance about the products of the next twenty. He keeps himself fit by jogging and running and – after a severe cycling accident – by taking long walks each day. It’s then that he can spend time pondering and planning what the research and development people will be doing.

“Every product, that’s my belief, must be tried and tested and gone over with a fine tooth-comb.” The company takes great care to see that every complaint, every practice-based idea or suggestion is tested to the last detail, be it about materials, construction methods or the product itself.

In 1994 a new exhibition and information centre was built in the Schiltach Works West. Lecture halls and seminar rooms equipped to the highest standard make

up the Hansgrohe Aquademie. Architects and experts in the sanitation sector teach and learn and enjoy what they are doing.

But that alone is not enough

Symposia, lectures and other professional events, seminars, forums on the environment, listening to experts, debates, competitions, workshops, new ideas for teaching and research, information and motivation for thousands of fellow-workers, dealers, customers and the general public, enthusing them for new things – in all this “Master Hans” and his Schiltach people are exemplary. These are not just “one-offs”. Rallies for solar-powered vehicles, soups and stews cooked on a solar hotplate, careful use of resources, environmentally-friendly production methods, energy saving in the works, awakening of consciousness: what is looked on as correct must find expression in practice. And look! It works!

All this said just by the way and between ourselves, because at Hansgrohe all this and much more has become second nature. So there is the fire brigade and the school; there are the children of Chernobyl and those in the kindergarten next door; there is the flood disaster in Saxony, the many clubs, social security and bonuses for the workers; there’s help and support for sport, the firm’s own health-care and assistance for the tsunami victims and in those hundred years of history a thousand other things. When the business prospers, everybody benefits. And the business is prospering mightily.

WHEN THE BUSINESS PROSPERS, EVERYONE BENEFITS.



1994 sees the opening of the Hansgrohe Aquademie. Three lecture rooms, a technical seminar room and an exhibition with six completely equipped bathrooms are to be found in an area of 1,100 m².



The donations made by the staff and employees of Hansgrohe for the victims of the Sri Lanka tsunami enable among other things the purchase of this boat, a new basis of existence for the fisherman Indika, his fellow-fishermen and their families.

100 YEARS OF HANSGROHE, AND THE STORY GOES ON...

Hansgrohe – Names and Dates

*Otto Johannes Grohe
from Luckenwalde in Brandenburg
called Hans, Hannes, "the Senior" or "the old man"
married (1) Luise Hannemann
(2) Magdalene Schöttle
(3) Emma Wolber*

*Hans moves with his wife and three children
(Helene, b. 1893, Liesel, b. 1895 and Johann, b. 1895)
from Luckenwalde to Schiltach.
Johann decides to call himself Hans, but is usually
referred to as "the Junior".*

*In Schiltach two more children are born:
Magdalene's son Friedrich (b. 1904) and
Emma's son Klaus (b. 1937)*

*In 1968 Klaus joins the Executive Committee and
becomes Managing Director in 1975 and in 2008
Chairman of the Supervisory Board. So Hansgrohe remains
a family of the company founder driven firm
without a break since 1901.*



*A strong team:
Lau Frandsen, Chairman of the Supervisory Committee,
and Klaus Grohe, Chief Executive Officer, in 2004.*

A historical turning-point

Klaus Grohe and the Hansgrohe family have seen to it that water flows cleaner both into and out of the kitchen and bathroom. They have started a story without parallel and have pulled things together with a gusto for which one rarely sees these days. Volume plus quality plus beauty.

The poor old century, feeling its age a bit by now, is drawing to a close. It seems to sigh now and again that things have been left undone, that this or that could have been done better, quicker and in a more friendly way with the environment. But the big Hansgrohe family, since 1999 a joint stock company not quoted on the stock market, has every reason to be proud. Here nothing has been left undone.

In 2001 a plumbing control unit that can be hidden in the wall came on the market. From day one on it has been a roaring success. The ibox universal, as it is called, contains six different operational blocks. This doesn't only please the installing engineer.

In autumn 2001 – 100 years and a few weeks since the firm was founded – everything is ready for a big celebration, decided and planned months in advance. But it's called off – after the terror attacks of 9/11 in the USA nobody feels like celebrating.

Family led

In 2003 the Masco Group acquires a majority shareholding by increasing its share from 27 % to 64.35 %. Hansgrohe is very pleased to have this strong partner from Michigan. But on the management floor everything remains as it was. With Klaus Grohe as Chief Executive Officer until he becomes the Chairman of the Advisory Board in 2008 and his long years deputy and congenial partner in the Executive Board Siegfried Gänßlen takes over the lead.

Immanuel Kant has been dead for 200 years, but his works are still more readable than much of contemporary literature. In 2004 the Chinese clone Hansgrohe showers and get found out; the South Koreans try the same with humans and meet the same fate. The price of oil increases, the dollar falls; it never rains but it pours. But if you look hard enough, you'll often find a rainbow.



I'M SINGING (AND DANCING) IN THE RAIN.



*The Raindance, thought up on the hospital bed:
a large head and a short handle. And a pleasurable
shower experience like never before.*

Shower experience XXL – it's a pleasure!

"Doo-di-doo Doo di-doo-di Doo-di-doo...": Remember Gene Kelly in the film "Singin' in the Rain" turning to the cop at the end of that song and singing by way of explanation *"I'm singing (and dancing) in the rain"*? Or that haunting tune by Burt Bacharach for the film "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" called *"Raindrops keep falling on my head"*? Any connection with Hansgrohe? Dancing in the rain? Sundance? Raindrops? RAIN-DANCE! Something of a shower revolution! Imagine those raindrops, thousands upon thousands, millions. A gentle breeze, the scent of summer... With five different shower settings, individually selected by a simple hand movement, everyone can enjoy a shower experience to suit his or her own pleasure. So Raindance came into being, something quite new, inspired by Mother Nature herself. And, not satisfied with that (very Hansgrohe!), the design and technical people added a second innovation: RaindanceAIR, where air is drawn into the shower head (hand-held or overhead). These "breathing" showers use the water more efficiently, give the shower jet a unique and quite natural quality and open up a new dimension in the pleasure of taking a shower. A veritable quantum leap – that's what I call progress!

"Great! It's almost erotic, the relationship one develops with such products!" Klaus and Richard Grohe admit in a subsequent interview.

However, the success story started off in a much less erotic place: the hospital in Lahr. There the boss lay confined to his bed after a severe cycling accident. One might almost say that what came into his head at first led the Hansgrohe researchers, directors, designers and engineers a merry dance. But they reported that, on the contrary, they began to dance with delight at what he had come up with.

Not bed rest – restlessness

The nurses brought coffee instead of pills and tablets. Fax and telephone, computer and paint board, chairs for everyone; his foot might have been in a noose, but his head was free. And that's much better than the other way round. Time was not there to be wasted, but put to profitable use for the sketching of ideas, drawing up of plans, thinking things over and over again, making changes. New technologies, new products, minimalism, timeless elegance. Anyone better that?

Travel alarm clock? Travel shower!

And, since one doesn't want to leave home comforts behind when travelling, since 2005 there's such a thing as the "shower case". Put an end to dripping showers, clogged-up ones in hotels, Uncle Karl's shower in Chemnitz that wets everything but the person showering. In the handy little travel case there's an ultra-flat RaindanceAIR complete with featherweight tools to fit it up wherever you are. Install it in next to no time; but remember: take it with you when you leave! Except, perhaps, at Uncle Karl's in Chemnitz; let him keep it...



ONLY THUS CAN
VISIONS EMERGE.



*International partners:
Philippe Grohe with Antonio Citterio...*



When developing new bathroom collections three linked things are central for Axor: “Water – Person – Space”. The deciding question is in what direction the bathroom of the future will develop. “One has to be always one step ahead of the market and the needs of the customer if one is going to succeed,” declares Philippe Grohe. “After all, we must be setters of trends, not followers of them.” The designer brand from the Black Forest succeeded in doing so in cooperation with Antonio Citterio.

Desire space

And no wonder, because Antonio Citterio and his colleagues in his Milan studio for architecture, interior design and graphic art saw from the very beginning that the taps, for example, cannot be viewed in

isolation, but as part of a harmonious whole. The bathroom is a living space, a desire space. Living space, as the Italian design partners insist, must be like a second skin.

Fuorisalone!

At the Milan International Furniture Exhibition of that year Axor presented “Water Dream 2005”. The well-known designers Jean-Marie Massaud, Patricia Urquiola, Erwan and Ronan Bouroullec created for Hansgrohe three visionary landscapes, products and spatial concepts with the theme of the bath. These young and innovative designers are the interpreters of the “bath of the future”. Each one of them represents one of the contemporary movements in design: organic,



eclectic and minimalist. This makes Axor an independent, open-ended process, allowing the creative genius immense freedom. *“We want to start a dialogue free of any constraints. Only thus can visions emerge,”* explains Philippe Grohe.

Nature Inspired Design

That these visions can really take shape in practice is demonstrated by the Collection Axor Massaud, which has grown out of the cooperation in the WaterDream Project. Behind it is a conception of space reintroducing the natural relationship we have with water as an element. So the bathroom is a living room where it's not just all about hygiene but the sensuous and emotional experience of water – a retiring-room, a

place of peace. Surely in today's hectic world that's just what we all need.



... and with Jean-Marie Massaud, here at the demonstration of the collection in Hong Kong.

HOPE IN THE LAND OF THE WASTEFUL.



In 2005 Hansgrohe publishes its first Sustainability Report.



The Hamburg Bäderland as well uses the waste heat from the shower water to decrease the energy consumption. This is possible since 2010 with the Pontos HeatCycle-Technology.

Hans increases awareness

Corporate values, corporate culture, responsibility for the future – all these are just empty words if they cannot be proved or disproved, or even put to the test, from outside.

As the very first German company in the sanitation sector, Hansgrohe published in 2005 its first Sustainability Report. This gives information about the activity of this medium-sized firm in the matters of economy, society and environment. Klaus Grohe hopes that other companies will follow their example. *“We don’t only measure innovation in terms of our products, but for us progressive and sustainable business leadership has always gone hand in hand with a sense of our responsibility reaching far outside the field of our own business activity,”* he explains.

The communicative heart

The company’s innovative and competitive strengths were confirmed by Baden-Württemberg’s Presiding Minister Günther Oettinger on a visit to the Axor Works. He was delighted to witness today’s Clever Hans and the Schiltach “sympathy shower”, and was able to take a whole stack of ideas away with him on his return to Stuttgart. What also fascinated him, as it does craftsmen and architects, dealers and clients alike, was the Aquademie. This has become more and more a place to exchange ideas, to set off professional debates, a source of impulse towards sustainability, a place of learning. With its ever-growing offers and programmes for further qualifications it has

met with such an echo that the building in the Auestrasse has been totally rebuilt and newly equipped at a cost of five million Euros. Here installers are trained, and master classes, wellness workshops and technical seminars held. The Aquademie has become a place of great influence – the communicative heart of the company. More than 50.000 guests from all over the world were counted in 2009.

The local craftsman is also a salesman. *“Hans gives the craftsman a helping hand, so that he can help those back home”* is a (very) rough translation of an alliterative entry in the Aquademie guest book written by a craftsman from the Ore Mountains (Erzgebirge) of Central Europe. For it is demonstrated there how the craftsman can organise small events when he returns home from the Aquademie. So naturally salescraft is on the programme, as well as tips on decoration and customer care.

Water, water everywhere...

In Germany people are still sticking their heads in the sand instead of using them to think. It may be true that constant dripping will eventually wear away the stone, but all that time the water is going to waste. It seems that the message has just not got through that water is a limited resource nor how important it is to use it sparingly.

On the one hand people are going on about the scarcity of oil and gas, yet still they heat their homes and business wastefully. It’s no different with water. Every day we let billions of litres of it go down

the drain, much of it hardly dirty – wasted, squandered, poured away. The Black Forest inventor was bugged by this over 30 years ago, but now at last a solution has been found, an inspired discovery At last: hope in the land of the wasteful!

Pontos AquaCycle is one of the first pieces of equipment in the world to go into series production in which “grey” or used water is cleaned to a standard fit for a bathing beach and reused. In places where grey water of many people showering or bathing can be collected, namely in hotels, in factories and offices, ecology and economy join hands. This is even more true since Pontos HeatCycle also uses the waste heat of the showering water to be used again – as stand alone solution or in combination with grey water recycling. The result is an energy consumption reduction as well. The climate will thank us.

For grey water is an almost inexhaustible resource – and faced with ever increasing water prices, diminishing water levels in wells and reservoirs (not to mention the inevitable “water wars” that are to come) we also must learn to do away with our beloved wasteful ways and start saving water. Pontos AquaCycle has now been installed not only by the Hamburg city authorities, where grey water is used for street-cleaning. Their warmest thanks go to Schiltach and Pontos AquaCycle for making this a present reality.



AFTER KYOTO: CONCRETE ACTION; AFTER CPPENHAGEN: CREATIVITY



*"Made in Germany."
Klaus Grohe lays the foundation stone for the
new instrument factory in Offenburg.*



*"Exemplary in the matter of environmental protection."
Environment Minister Tanja Gönner
with Otto Schinle (l) and Siegfried Gänßlen during
a visit to Schiltach.*

WOM with a Whoosh!

Almost exactly 100 years after the firm built its first factory in Schiltach, Hansgrohe laid the foundation stone for another. In February 2008 the instrument factory WOM in Offenburg became the tenth production site worldwide; in Germany there are now half a dozen. Just eight months after commencing work, the factory was ready for production – and what a technological marvel it is! Remote-controlled stock-keeping, extension of hybrid assembly, efficient manufacturing control – a new combination of Black Forest ingenuity and innovative technology, all together in an area of 5600 square metres. And in 2010 the factory is being extended!

A Steady Course

This development is a clear affirmation of Germany's importance in a time when the collapse of Lehmann Brothers endangered the whole economic climate, which of course affects the Hansgrohe family just as much as any other business. And yet: because the need for careful economic management is not just a new phenomenon since the current global crisis, the influential Handelsblatt, Germany's leading financial newspaper could justifiably report: "Hansgrohe AG is steering a steady course through the crisis."

Wonderful and Exemplary:

The Green Family

Steering a steady course is getting literally ever more difficult, not just despite but because of the melting of the icebergs. Global warming is challenging the

world community almost to breaking-point. Not so Hansgrohe: now the message after the world climate change conferences in Kyoto and Copenhagen is "Concrete Action; Constructive Creativity." "Yes, we can." So the "Green Family" is making its own contribution towards the protection of the climate. The ideas and concrete measures made towards ecologically-friendly dealings with valuable resources and the setting-out of measurable sustainable goals have awarded the firm's green credentials two top ratings:

"wonderful" was the general opinion on the German pavilion at the Expo in Saragossa, which concentrated on the theme of "Water and Steady Development." More than half a million visitors were deeply impressed by the water technology, above all the Pontos AquaCycle. Schiltach is the recognised home of great water ideas.

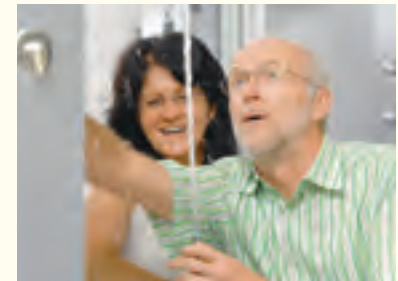
"exemplary" was the verdict of Tanja Gönner, Environment Minister in the government of Baden-Württemberg, on Hansgrohe's deep involvement in matters of environmental protection. She expressed the wish that others would follow suit. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!

Hansgrohe worldwide

Listen carefully, watch closely and then act decisively: what was true for the offspring of Clever Hans all those years ago applies no less to today's business, which has sensed the trend towards globalisation. Having a presence overseas pays divi-



*"Schiltach. Home of great water ideas."
Hansgrohe in the German pavilion at the
Expo in Saragossa.*



*MUMM in practice.
Motivated cooperation can be fun!*



*Businesses that put their trust in age and
experience get their just reward.
Hansgrohe takes second prize in the
Corporate Health Awards in 2009.*

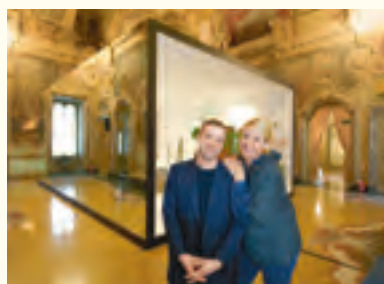
dends; internationalism strengthens, not weakens. The network of Hansgrohe subsidiaries summed up by Summer 2010 totalled no less than 37.

Have the guts!

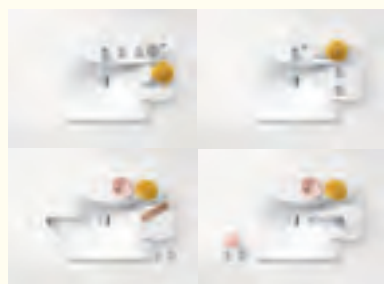
One needs courage for such global ventures, and for this there is a need for what is expressed by the German acronym MUMM, which means being motivated

to work together closely. The whole firm and its workforce needs it in facing these demographic changes, and consequently the firm has been awarded another accolade: the "Corporate Health Award" for its attitude to experienced workers. Contrary to popular trends, which see youth as the be-all and end-all, young Hans and old Hans can do more together than the general public assumes.

UP, UP AND AWAY WITH HANSGROHE



*Patricia Urquiola and Philippe Grohe
at the presentation of the new bathroom collection
Axor Urquiola in Milan*



*"Feel Free to Compose!"
With Axor Bouroullec the freedom of form
reaches a new dimension.*



The new Chairman of the Management Board Siegfried Gänßlen (l.) with the new Chairman of the Supervisory Board Klaus Grohe.

The Darling Buds of May

In one of his sonnets, Shakespeare wrote "Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May". In May 2008 it was not rough winds, but the wind of change that saw Klaus Grohe step down as Chairman of the Management Board in favour of Siegfried Gänßlen, who for many years had been Finance Director. Klaus Grohe became the Supervisory Board Chairman, and Richard Grohe deputy to Siegfried Gänßlen. Thus the future of the Company remains in good hands.

Design or die!

One of the factors in this success can be summed up in the phrase: Design or die! Patricia Urquiola has developed together with Axor a new and stunning bathroom

collection. No longer a bare wet room; now more a living space. Axor Urquiola offers a sense of well-being and security without sacrificing individuality and intimacy. Feminine, poetic! And with the Axor Bouroullec collection the room for creativity reaches a new dimension. In 2010 Roman and Erwan Bouroullec joined the ranks of renowned designers with whom Axor present innovative and futuristic bathroom design.

"A poem of elegance and grace" is also the mixer and shower programme Pura Vida. Soft, flowing lines characterise the products of the close cooperation between Hansgrohe and Phoenix Design. Like their designers, the combination of white and chrome complement each other in a magical way.

Up with the times

It is generally acknowledged that with these firework-like bursts of activity Hansgrohe is well up with the times, if not ahead of them. It's not surprising that the rising stars among designers are queuing up to work with the firm. And what results they are achieving! The International Design Award of Baden-Württemberg, for example, or the "Prize of Prizes", the Design Award of the Federal Republic of Germany. By 2010 more than 300 awards adorn the trophy shelves of Hansgrohe: without question a trendsetter!

Up, up and away

With Hansgrohe ever newer heights can be reached, as both the firm's employees and its illustrious customers well know. In the world's tallest building, Burj Dubai, they put their trust in mixers and showers from the Black Forest. And à propos "higher, quicker, further": As Official Partner of the German Team at the Olympics, Hansgrohe has cosseted the guests of the German Olympic Association at the Games in Vancouver and Whistler with their products "Made in Germany." And, as South Africa is just as particular about the care of sportsmen and women, many of the teams learned to enjoy the products of Black Forest ingenuity at the Football World Cup. A winner!



*At home in the highest circles.
Hansgrohe mixers and showers are simply
essential elements of good living.*



*The Prize of Prizes.
Richard Grohe and Töm Schönherr of
Phoenix Design receive the top Design Award
of the Federal Republic of Germany.*

*And:
the "Phoenix boys" at work on the mixer and
shower programme "Pura Vida". (left)*

A PASSION FOR WATER, THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

*Hansgrohe remains
a family business.*

Klaus Grohe has four sons:

*Richard Grohe, b. 14.9.1965
(married to Alexandra Hübner, 3 children:
Pat-Rick, Alina and Johannes Friedrich)*

*Philippe Grohe, b. 3.1.1967
(married to Tina Hagemann, 4 children:
Lucas, Marie, Marek, Emma)*

*Pierre-Nicolas Grohe, b. 3.10.1975
(married to Stephanie Hudgins, 2 children:
Jay and Nicolas Christian)*

and Jannik Grohe, b. 17.10.1986

*Opposite page:
“Our own flesh and blood brand”
Three generations of Hansgrohe:
Johannes, Richard and Klaus Grohe*

“It’s felt more strongly than ever, our passion for water, the elixir of life,” explains Klaus Grohe. Because the protection of the environment is writ large in the philosophy of the worldwide Schiltach family.

The ethical basis of the company includes integrity, the observance of laws and regulations, fair treatment of customers, suppliers, competitors and with one another in the big family of Hansgrohe. There must be no discrimination; tolerance is a duty expected of all; absolute regard must be kept for all human rights. Involvement in the community is part of the company’s activity. *“Perhaps it lies in the care and diligence of the Black Forest people, in the craftsmanship and inventiveness that are all around here. Perhaps also in our passion for all that has to do with water, the elixir of life, a passion that has guided the course of the company which is still led by the family of Hans Grohe.”*

And when you look beyond the valley of the Kinzig, you see also beyond the strict limits of the many subsidiaries and groups that represent Hans all around the world. Our Lucky Hans, the clever one, has always set out and moved on. This “blessed restlessness” in the face of obduracy and the temptation to stand still is like the drive belt that Lucky Hans wound round that stone over a hundred years ago to set the machines in motion.

Nothing ever stays the same

Time seems to fly by. The world has become smaller, yet the journeying goes on, taking you and me and him and her

to all corners of the earth. Nothing ever stays the same. Forests die, hunger is worldwide despite our affluence, wells dry up. One war follows another. Yet hope remains that we might see sense, that we might roll up our sleeves and do something. Otherwise: no life for anyone.

Lucky Hans has been on a long journey. He’s seen black Africa and Red China, felt the fresh Arizona wind on his face, crossed the snow-covered Alps. He’s been to the big cities and the out-of-the-way places, has listened and pondered, acted and traded and enjoyed the results of his digging, wherever he was.

And in all those years he has dug up many a treasure. And when he has felt the sun on his back, he has always set out afresh towards the future. There has always been a lot to do for Clever Hans.



LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL AND LIFE GOES ON.

WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT IS SO OBSESSED WITH LOOKING TO THE FUTURE THAT WE FORGET HOW IMPORTANT IT IS NOT TO IGNORE THE PAST.

BUT IT'S THERE, HIDDEN BEHIND FACTS AND FIGURES, THAT THE TRUE STORIES ARE TO BE READ. STORIES OF PIONEERS, OF LAYERS OF FOUNDATIONS, OF CRITICAL, VALIANT SPIRITS.

These stories are the first step on the way into the future. Pater Grohmann, 2005–2007

Sources

Letters and notes of the company's founder Hans Grohe and his sons, taken from the Hansgrohe archives in Schiltach

Conversations with Klaus Grohe and his family

Conversations with Anita Chini (Freudenstadt) and Roswitha Steurer (Alpirsbach)

Conversations and interviews with Andreas Haug (designer, frog design, Phoenix Design), the friend of Klaus Grohe, and Dieter Brucklacher

And with colleagues at Hansgrohe, including Ruth Wöhrle, Gertrud Akaltan, Otto Schinle, Horst Flieger, Gerhard Blust, Jörg Reiff and Dr. Carsten Tessmer

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www.hansgrohe.de

Many thanks for open doors

This work was written to the best of the author's knowledge and belief as a "literary alternative" to the official history of Hansgrohe. It makes no claim to be an exhaustive history.

Sources of the Illustrations

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Public Relations
Auestraße 5–9
77761 Schiltach
Telephone: +49 7836 51-1231, -1297
Fax: +49 7836 51-1170
E-Mail: public.relations@hansgrohe.com
Internet: www.hansgrohe.com

