

Feature

Hans Peter Bimler at Age 85

By Barbara Bimler, PhD

From childhood, Hans Peter Bimler, a Diplomate of the IAO, was involved with teeth. His father, Walter Bimler, was a society-dentist in Silesia, an eastern province of Germany and very popular with the local aristocracy. He engaged his son as a course assistant, and thus led him early to a life of research and teaching. He encouraged him to study medicine. Hans Peter enrolled in the medical faculty in his hometown of Breslau in 1935. In those days, the students changed university once a year, to get a good picture of the different teachings. In 1939, to study under Martin Schwarz, Hans Peter went to Vienna, Austria. But soon World War II began, and he returned to Breslau to study and to work with his father (Fig. 1).

The first result of his innovative spirit was the "Roentgenphotogramm" (Fig. 2), presented at the EOS congress in 1939 in Wiesbaden, Germany, the first of many to come. In order to show the relation between the skull, the teeth, and the soft tissue, an x-ray and a photograph were superimposed. Today, this is done by computer, but 60



Figure 1 (above) — Hans Peter Bimler as a student in his father's office, with profile study.



Figure 2 (right) — This superposition of head plate and photograph was developed about 1938 to give a better understanding of the malocclusion to patients and parents.

years ago, the idea was rather spectacular.

Active military service with the medical corps interrupted research, study, and work. The war, and specifically later, the German retreat, provided Peter Bimler with important lessons for the rest of his life: the possibility of working with minimal means, and respect of the healing power of nature.

Meanwhile the world did not stand still. The steel producer Krupp had begun earlier to market stainless steel for dental use. Several types of removable orthodontic appliances were produced and gained territory among the general dentists. This is connected with the socio-political situation of those days: treatment for everybody's child who might need it; mass treatment for the population. This ideal can only be realized with removable appliances.

The activators were also in use in father Walter's office. Hans Peter's clinical eye, on leave from the front, enjoyed the healthy gums of the patients. At the same time he found the looks and comfort of the activator rather clumsy.

After release from a British prison camp, Hans Peter found himself a refugee, as his hometown was no longer part of Germany. His family had managed to flee to the West. At 30 years of age, Hans Peter started from zero with nothing but his medical degree. Of course, most the German population was in the same or a worse position.

Father Walter had managed to transfer a dental chair and some head plates to the west. Now Hans Peter had ample free time to study the head plates again and again and to discover the patterns of the facial types, laying ground for his "Bimler Cephalometric Analysis." When slowly their common orthodontic office started functioning, he worked

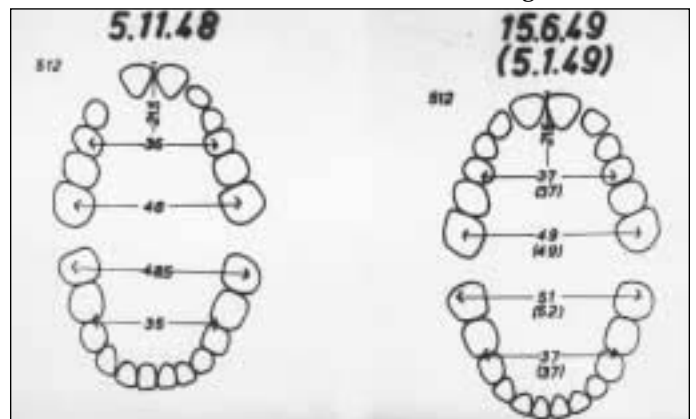


Figure 3 — After the war, the first clinical results with the "Elastic Oral Adaptor" were encouraging.



Figure 4 - In the early 60s, the "Elastic Oral Adaptor" was internationally known as the "Bimler Appliance."



Figure 5 — Hans Peter Bimler poses for the photographer.



Figure 6 — The Bimler couple with their son-in-law, Dr. Michael P. Rhodes, at the EOS congress 1990 in Copenhagen.

to streamline the activator. He checked what was essential for the treatment, and eliminated the rest, replacing as much as possible of the acrylic by wire. After much trial and error, even upper and lower part united only by wire arches. This made the appliance not only elastic but also adjustable in the three dimensions of space. Now, the entire treatment

could be finished with one and the same appliance, which was an important factor in post-war Germany. The first results of his device were rather encouraging (Fig. 3).

At the same time, continuing his pre-war work, he developed the "Bimler Cephalometric Analysis." This made his name in anthropological circles, as we found out



Figure 7 — In Rome, the Pope gives his blessings to the family.



Figure 8 — In 2001, Hans Peter Bimler always enjoys a good glass of the regional Rhine wine.

only by chance, recently spending some time in the US library of congress. In the early 1950's, analysis and appliance were ready for publication. In the 60's, Peter Bimler was rather famous and lecturing in Europe, the Americas, and Africa (Figs. 4 & 5).

However, really close to his heart was neither appliance nor analysis but always his wife Erika. (Fig. 6). In 1953, he had married his school days sweetheart. Thereafter, she accompanied him everywhere (Fig. 7). Today he swears that all his international invitations and all his fame were only due to her wits and beauty.

With the new millennium, alas, he has to face life without her (Fig. 8). But he puts on a smile and does enjoy the fact that his appliance, half a century old, works on in so many mouths all over the world.



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Dr. Barbara Bimler, daughter of Hans Peter Bimler, is currently the General Manager of Bimler Laboratories. She received a Ph.D. in 1991 and lectures internationally about the Bimler Appliance and Cephalometric Analysis. She also has over 40 publications to her credit.