

EULOGY FOR DR. WALTER MANDLER

May 10, 1922 – April 21, 2005

Our thanks to Rolf Fricke who provided us with this eulogy which he presented during Memorial services for Walter Mandler, former VP and Director of Research and Development for Leitz Canada in Midland. Dr. Mandler, one of Leica's top optical designers, was noted for computing most of the famous Leica lenses of the 1960s to the 1980s. Rolf Fricke is a former regional Director of Marketing Communications at the Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester, NY. Co-founder of the Leica Historical Society of America (1968), Leica Historical Society (UK, 1969) and Leica Historica (Germany, 1975). Mr. Fricke came to know Mandler and his research very well over the decades.

I am profoundly honored and simultaneously thoroughly intimidated by the invitation to say a few words about Dr. Walter Mandler.

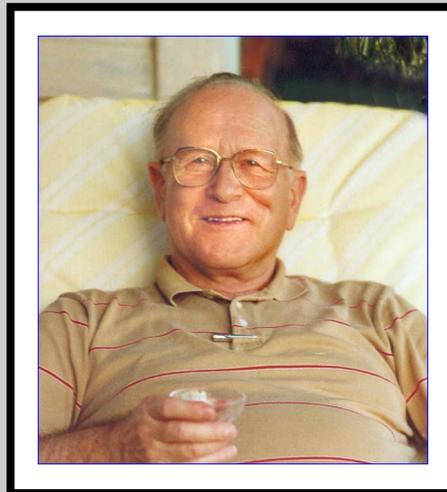
This is not going to be a mournful lament, but a heartfelt salute to this truly extraordinary human being.

It was some 50 years ago that I first met Walter, and the first impression was that of a stern schoolmaster. My small sons were certainly intimidated when he asked them "How much is 7 times 27?" But one soon learned that behind that façade was a heart of gold, a caring and very unassuming, self-effacing individual who insisted on giving generous credit where credit was due.

When I wanted to write a story about him, like the one I wrote about Walter Kluck, his response was (Ach, das will doch keiner wissen!) "Oh, nobody wants to know that!"

For example, in discussing some of his outstanding lens designs, he made it a point to praise the input of others who were so good at what they did, like his close collaborator Erich Wagner, and the contributions of the earliest Leitz Canada pioneers and friends like Ernst Pausch, Henry Weimer, Horst Haseneier, Helmut Hildebrandt, Ludwig Schauss and Andre DeWinter, expert designer of sophisticated lens mounts and others, and to credit them in patents whenever possible. As a result, I became familiar with their names before I ever met them in person!

More recently, upon having his portrait displayed in an ELCAN boardroom, he commented that Walter Kluck should also be repre-



Dr. WALTER MANDLER

sented, because it was to Mr. Kluck's great credit that he saved the rangefinder Leica camera from extinction, and in so doing assured the continued production of lenses for that camera in Midland and avoided hardship to employees who would have to be laid off in significant numbers.

Walter Mandler was not a status-seeker: When offered the position of President of Leitz Canada, he declined, not wanting to be bogged down by administrative bureaucracy.

When it was fashionable to build cottages by the lake, he opted instead for a modest log cabin in the serenity of the Moonstone woods near Midland, something that he could not have done without the practical skills and help of energetic

craftsmen like Günter Naumann and George Matthias

As a student of lens design, I occasionally asked Walter Mandler questions about optics, and he had the wonderful quality of explaining things without speaking down to a person, without making one feel dumb. He seemed to enjoy fostering a person's knowledge and he went out of his way to do so.

There is a picture of Walter Mandler as a small boy in shorts and suspenders, standing in a field where his father and mother were pitching hay onto a big wagon. To me, this image symbolizes his back-



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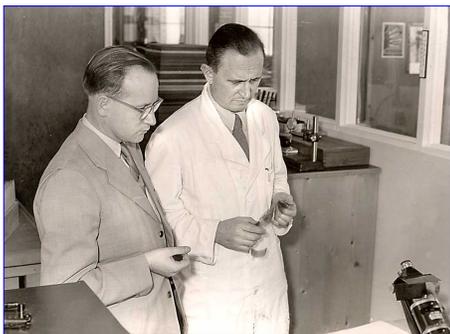
ground of wholesome family values, faith and rock-solid integrity. From this humble background, he rose to become one of the world's foremost and most prolific lens designers, recognized around the globe.

I have a book by an Italian author who assembled a definitive classification of Leitz lenses for the legendary Leica camera: More than 45 of these high-performance lenses, many of them revolutionary, were

designed by Walter Mandler! Such as the world's first 35 mm f/1.4 lens for a 35 mm camera, a Summilux, plus a 50 mm f/1.4 Summilux lens that was unsurpassed and remained in the line for some 40 years before new advances in aspheric fabrication technology made improvements possible; plus the 50 mm f/1 Noctilux-M, the fastest 50 mm lens still in series production – all developed right here in Midland. And lenses for IMAX movie projection systems, high-aperture lenses for Picker X-ray applications, lenses for RCA Victor television cameras, extra-high resolution lenses for intelligence-gathering and scopes for the Canadian, US and NATO armed forces – the list goes on and on. The computer giant Hewlett-Packard of California recently presented Walter with one of its very successful products, an HP SCANJET 4C scanner that contained the one-millionth lens of a design computed by Walter Mandler.

That is quite remarkable for a man who came to Midland in the fifties to stay on loan for only a couple of months but who ended up remaining in this beautiful country for more than fifty highly productive years AND choosing to become a Canadian citizen!

But how did all this begin? Walter once told me that he was in his mid-twenties when he applied for



Dr. Mandler with Otto Geier, a supervisor in the optics department, conferring in the former Leitz Canada plant in Midland, Ontario

a job at the venerable firm of Ernst Leitz Wetzlar in Germany. He was offered a starting position in sales, but he did the unheard-of thing by turning it down, saying that he wanted to work in the optical design department. Asked whether he knew



Walter Mandler with his wife Hildegunt.

anything at all about optics, he said "No, but I want to learn." His chutzpah must have impressed the interviewers because they granted his wish and, within six months, he rose to lead a group of five optikers who laboriously performed ray-tracing, using logarithm tables!

He earned a degree in physics from the University of Giessen while working at Leitz, and much later he easily achieved his PhD degree *Summa cum Laude*. He had a remarkably broad knowledge and keen intuition, not only of theoretical physics and optics, but also of materials, cost-effective fabrication, history, geography, geology, music and much more including a razor-sharp memory and a long-standing interest in horsemanship.

From his gentlemanly demeanor, one would never sense that this extraordinary man endured some of life's most cruel challenges, like suffering a catastrophic life-threatening head injury, losing to cancer his beloved spouse, mother of their three talented daughters and, unexpectedly, losing an adult daughter. Yet he bore his immense pain and grief with admirable dignity and grace.

Walter Mandler was a role model to many of us, a father figure to me and to some of you present here. He inspired me to be more tolerant and helped restore my self-esteem.

LEICA Lenses: designed by Dr. Walter Mandler

As selected and identified by Dr. Mandler, himself, from the book *Identifying Leica Lenses* by Italian author Ghester Sartorius, Amphoto Books, New York. Not in chronological order. Compiled from that book by Rolf Fricke, 8 May 2005.

A) Screwmount Lenses:

Summicron 35/2
Summicron 90/2
Elmar 135/4
Telyt 200/4
Telyt 280/4.8
Telyt 400/5 (2nd)

Summicron 90/2 (2nd)
Summicron 90/2 (3rd)
Elmar 135/4
Tele-Elmar 135/4
Elmarit 135/2.8 (1st)
Elmarit 135/2.8 (2nd)

B) Leica M lenses:

Elmarit 21/2.8
Elmarit 28/2.8 (3rd)
Summicron 35/2 (1st)
Summicron 35/2 (2nd & 3rd)
Summicron 35/2 (4th)
Summilux 35/1.4
Summicron 50/2
Summicron 50/2 (4th)
Summicron 50/2 (5th)
Elcan 50/2
Summilux 50/1.4 (2nd)
Summilux 50/1.4 (3rd)
Noctilux 50/1
Summilux 75/1.4 (1st)
Summilux 75/1.4 (2nd)
Elmar 90/4 (3 elements)
Tele-Elmarit 90/2.8 (1st)
Tele-Elmarit 90/2.8 (2nd)
Elmarit 90/2.8 (2nd)
Summicron 90/2 (1st)

C) Leica R Lenses:

Elmarit-R 19/2.8 (1st)
Elmarit-R 19/2.8 (2nd)
Summicron-R 35/2 (2nd)
Summicron-R 50/2 (1st)
Summicron-R 50/2 (2nd & 3rd)
Summilux-R 80/1.4
Elmarit-R 90/2.8 (1st)
Elmarit-R 90/2.8 (2nd)
Summicron-R 90/2
Elmarit-R 135/2.8 (1st)
Elmarit-R 135/2.8 (2nd)
Apo-Telyt-R 180/3.4
Telyt-R 250/4 (1st)
Telyt-R 250/4 (2nd)
Telyt-R 350/4.8

D) Leica M Lenses not listed in the aforementioned book:

Elcan 66/2 (Extra-high resolution lens for the US Navy)
Elcan 90/1