

# The beginning: 1941 – 1945

*“We had to overcome obstacles  
that anyone worried by the current  
situation would view as simply  
unsurmountable.”*

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Adolf Mann, in the company bulletin  
“Der Herold” in November 1941

# Company founded during the Second World War

**FILTER PRODUCTION.** During the war years, two textile manufacturers took the brave step of entering filter production – an area of technology that was as yet still in its infancy – in order to save the jobs of their employees.

In early 1941, as Germany was entering its third year at war, two visionary textile manufacturers signed a license agreement that saw them take over the production of oil and air filters from piston manufacturer Mahle. At this time, the swastika was flying over many parts of Europe and the march of German armed forces seemed unstoppable. The invasion of Russia had not yet begun

and total war was still some way off. Nevertheless, the wartime economy was already affecting established businesses such as textile manufacturer Wilh. Bleyle GmbH in Stuttgart, which for the last two years had been run by a former teacher and a lawyer – Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel.



#### PLACES THAT DEFINE PEOPLE / Altshausen

Altshausen, situated between Donautal and Lake Constance in the district of Ravensburg, is famous for its castle, in which the descendants of the Dukes of Württemberg still reside today. What few people realize, however, is that in 1883 a pastoral institute named "Martinshaus" opened here. Here, local children received religious instruction and were prepared for confirmation. The parents of Adolf Mann, who was born in Altshausen in 1890, ran Martinshaus – his father was a teacher and organist, while his mother looked after the approximately 20 children who lived in the house. Adolf Mann was himself taught by his father for two years before moving to the Latin school in Saulgau in 1900. Although his education and career path took him elsewhere, Alfred Mann was most certainly influenced by the Protestant work ethic and ethos growing up with his parents in Altshausen – and this influence remained with him throughout his career. Today, the former Martinshaus site sits right next to the Protestant church and is home to a hearing and speech center run by "Die Zieglerschen", a welfare organization.

## MANAGEMENT BUYOUT UNDER DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

The textile company Wilh. Bleyle GmbH, where both Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel held key managerial roles and which employed around 6,500 people at locations in Stuttgart, Ludwigsburg, and Brackenheim, found itself faced with a crisis on two fronts in 1938. The long-established company was struggling with declining profitability and increasing losses on the one hand, and had come into conflict with the Nazis on the other. Criminal charges were brought against the directors and members of the owner family on the grounds of treason, currency offenses, and tax evasion. Consequently, the directors had to resign their posts, the owners were imprisoned, and the company was forced to pay penalties and tax arrears. Worse still, the "Deutsche Arbeitsfront" (German Labor Front), supported by influential Nazi functionaries, wanted to incorporate the company into a party-affiliated foundation.

It was in these dramatic circumstances that the Bleyle family turned to long-standing employees Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel. They were to take over the running of the company, primarily "in the interests of preserving the life's work of the Bleyle family".<sup>1</sup> To inject new capital into the troubled company, the new directors founded Textilwerke Wilh. Bleyle KG in Stuttgart in 1938, to which the Bleyle assets were sold.

The Bleyle company was saved for the time being, but the start of the Second World War on September 1, 1939, brought new challenges. Because Bleyle's textile manufacturing business was classed as not essential to the war effort, much of the workforce was relocated to the front or to armaments factories.

# 1941 – 1945

Immediately after the takeover of filter production, the existing testing department at Mahle was expanded with the introduction of improved technical facilities and the company's own engine test rigs. Testing at customer sites and practical trials kept up the fast pace of innovation.

## PLACES THAT DEFINE PEOPLE / Schwaigern

When Erich Hummel was born in Schwaigern, near Heilbronn, in 1893, his father was the local pastor. In 1898, Christian Friedrich Hummel became the town pastor in Crailsheim, and in 1903 he was made dean of the entire church district. Like his future partner, Adolf Mann, Erich Hummel also had a Protestant upbringing, which would influence his entrepreneurial activities in later years. Dr. Erich Hummel's strong sense of social responsibility, which in the post-war years took the form of numerous sociopolitical initiatives at Mann + Hummel, many of them initiated by Adolf Mann, was deeply rooted in the values that he learned in his early life. His wife Edith also devoted herself to working for the community and in the 1960s she took over the management of a retirement home belonging to the welfare organization of the Anthroposophical Christian community in Stuttgart. The second son of Dr. Erich Hummel, professor of theology Dr. Gert Hummel, dedicated himself to the rebuilding of the Protestant Lutheran Church in Georgia following his retirement, where he established a Diakonisches Werk, a German welfare organization, and was appointed bishop.

### Kastanien im Mai

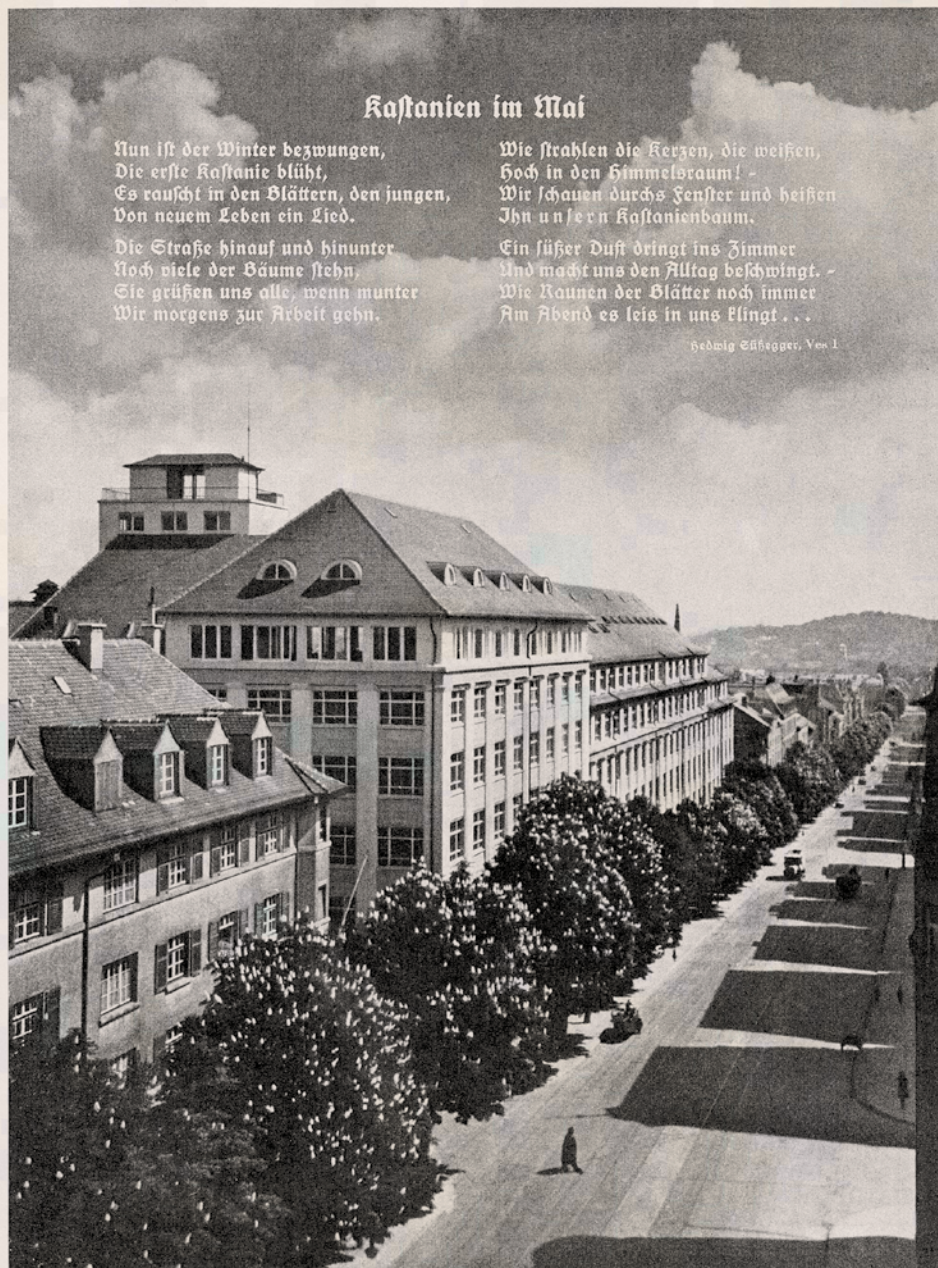
Nun ist der Winter bezwungen,  
Die erste Kastanie blüht,  
Es rauscht in den Blättern, den jungen,  
Von neuem Leben ein Lied.

Die Straße hinaus und hinunter  
Noch viele der Bäume stehn,  
Sie grüßen uns alle, wenn munter  
Wir morgens zur Arbeit gehn.

Wie strahlen die Kerzen, die weißen,  
Hoch in den Himmelsraum! -  
Wir schauen durchs Fenster und heißen  
Ihn unsern Kastanienbaum.

Ein süßer Duft dringt ins Zimmer  
Und macht uns den Alltag beschwingt. -  
Wie Raunen der Blätter noch immer  
Am Abend es leis in uns klingt . . .

Hedwig Schleggen, Von I.



Hauptwerk Stuttgart und Kastanienallee in der Rotebühlstraße

Foto: Holtmann

DER HEROLD

APRIL/MAI 1941

HEFT 1 • 3. JAHRGANG

Werkzeitschrift für die Betriebsgemeinschaften: Wilh. Bleyle K.G. Stuttgart, A. Mann & Co. G.m.b.H. Wien, Textilwerk Schiltigheim G.m.b.H. Straßburg-Schiltigheim, Filterwerk Mann & Hummel G.m.b.H. Ludwigsburg

**COMPANY BULLETIN / "Der Herold"** was originally the company bulletin of Wilh. Bleyle KG, and in 1941 the employees of Filterwerk Mann + Hummel were added to its circulation. The picture shows the main Bleyle plant at Rotebühlstraße in Stuttgart.



# 1942 – 1945

Development of cyclone air filters for armored vehicles

## RAPID DEVELOPMENT / The car industry before the Second World War

The German automotive industry experienced tremendous growth – both technical and financial – in the 1930s. By 1939, the German Reich had 31 main car types, 11 car manufacturers, 12 truck manufacturers, 6 small-truck manufacturers, 14 tractor and trailer manufacturers. This development in turn led to the growth of the supplier industry, which in 1934 reported sales of 386 million reichsmarks. Constant increases in engine power and manufacturer demands for longer maintenance intervals also resulted in increased requirements with respect to oil and air filters. This increased complexity was reflected in key figures for the industry – filter production rose by 170 percent between 1933 and 1936, while sales in the same period increased by 350 percent. Car manufacturing in Germany peaked at 67,561 units in 1940. This was followed by a decline due to the war, which saw production fall to 21,656 units by 1944.

**MAHLE-Hausmitteilung**

Herrn  
 von Abtlg.: GP..... an Abtlg.: Fritz, Claus.....  
 Durchschrift(en) an: .....  
 Datum:.....26.6.1941.  
 Zeichen:.....GP-Bo/Kr.:  
 Betrifft: Ihre Versetzung von unserer Firma zur Firma Filterwerk Mann & Hummel G.m.b.H., Ludwigsburg, Hindenburgstr.37/45.

Abtlg.	Eingang	Name	Ausgang

Unter Bezugnahme auf die Ihnen im Januar d.J. übergebene MAHLE-Hausmitteilung wegen Verpachtung der Filterabteilung nach Ludwigsburg teilen wir Ihnen mit, daß der Zeitpunkt für Ihre Versetzung jetzt gekommen ist.

Ihr Übertritt zu der Firma Mann & Hummel wird demnach im Laufe des Monats September.. erfolgen.

Wir geben Ihnen zur Kenntnis, daß die Firma Mann & Hummel lt. Pachtvertrag über die Dauer desselben in die Rechte und Pflichten des zwischen Ihnen und uns abgeschlossenen Anstellungsvertrags eintritt. Ihre Personalpapiere werden demnach mit Ihrer Versetzung direkt an die Firma Mann & Hummel übergeben. Es wurde vereinbart, daß Ihr Gehalt im Übergangsmonat noch von uns ausbezahlt wird.

Sofern Ihnen infolge der Versetzung nach Ludwigsburg ein Mehraufwand an Fahrgeld entsteht, wird Ihnen dieser auf Grund einer Genehmigung des Treuhänders vergütet.

Zu Ihrer Versetzung liegt die Genehmigung des Arbeitsamts vor, ebenso ist die DAF. darüber unterrichtet.

Wir erwarten, daß Sie sich für die Filterabteilung mit Rücksicht auf deren kriegswichtige Produktion wie seither auch bei der Firma Mann & Hummel voll einsetzen und sprechen Ihnen für Ihre seitherige Dienstleistung unseren Dank aus.

Heil Hitler!  
 M a h l e Komm.-Ges.  
 Personal - Abteilung  
*Mahle* *Hoyer*

**RELOCATION** / In June 1941, employees from Mahle were relocated to Filterwerk Mann + Hummel in Ludwigsburg. Their travel expenses were reimbursed.



**SYMBOLIC LOGO** / When trying to create a memorable word and figurative mark to register with the patent office, Dr. Erich Hummel recalled a type of pastry from his home town of Crailsheim. The M-shaped “Horaff” is based on a Germanic and Celtic symbol representing blessings and fertility. The tips of the Horaff, which originally pointed upwards, were turned downwards to “assimilate the letter ‘M’ representing the Mann family”<sup>2</sup> and form a heart with the word “filter”. The patent registration process initially ended in failure due to an objection from another company, but after a number of modifications was eventually completed in 1966.

Eventually, Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel, in their capacity as subcontractors, managed to secure orders for essential wartime commodities and thus at least save the jobs of metalworkers and engineers. The idea of producing parachutes in order to have the company classified as a strategic supplier did not come to fruition, however.

Another solution then emerged closer to home. The leading German manufacturer of pistons and filters, Mahle KG, based in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, had reached its limits in terms of capacity and was looking for a partner to which some areas of production could be outsourced. One possibility were the filters for gasoline and diesel engines, which Mahle produced at its plant in Fellbach. It is not clear how the initial contact came about. What is certain, however, is the fact that in the fall of 1939, just as war broke out, the first Bleyle employees began to produce dual gap-type filters for Mahle in a contract manufacturing operation. Little did anyone know at the time just how significant this step would eventually prove to be.

## A BRAVE MOVE – FROM TEXTILE FIRM TO FILTER PLANT

The collaboration between Bleyle and Mahle for filter contract manufacturing led to increased contact between Adolf Mann, Dr. Erich Hummel, and Mahle management. At the same time, the demands being placed on Mahle for army and air force production continued to grow. In addition to pistons for vehicle and aircraft engines, the company supplied injection molded magnesium components and aircraft components. However, one area that was neglected over the years was filter production. Faced with the challenge of accelerating the pace of development and supplying ever increasing quantities across all product areas, management at Mahle decided to take the logical step of concentrating solely on piston manufacturing and selling the filter production business, which still employed 450 people.



#### BY THE WAY / Filterwerk Mann + Hummel ...

... didn't just produce filters in the early years. The company also produced toys for Christmas in 1943 as part of the winter relief drive.

It was with such a proposal that Mahle approached its subcontractor, Wilh. Bleyle KG, in 1940. The company directors, Mann and Hummel, found themselves in a quandary. On the one hand, taking over filter production would give the company the status of strategic supplier that was so badly needed. On the other hand, the company had no experience in this area. Consequently, the two men initially responded to the idea with "major reservations".<sup>3</sup> The considered and cautious approach adopted by Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel was evident in the fact that preparations for the takeover were not completed until the end of 1940, and filter production then began gradually. On January 7, 1941, they signed a two-year license agreement. The licensee was a company that had been set up specifically for this purpose just the day before – Filterwerk Mann + Hummel GmbH.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the company was, according to the articles of incorporation, "the production and distribution of metal products of all types, in particular oil and other filters".<sup>5</sup> The new company was entered in the commercial register on January 20, 1941. The capital stock of 500,000 reichsmarks was held equally by Adolf and Elisabeth Mann and Dr. Erich and Edith Hummel. The company founders had, after careful consideration, taken a brave step and in doing so laid the foundations for a global company, although they did not realize this at the time.

Before the new company could commence operations, however, there was still a lot of groundwork to be done. This included deciding where the filters should be produced. The decision was ultimately made in favor of Ludwigsburg. Here, just north of Stuttgart, textile firm Bleyle had two production facilities – one in Wilhelm-Murr-Straße and another in rented premises of the official government uniform supplier in Hindenburgstraße, not far from the imposing Baroque Ludwigsburg Palace, which dates back to the early 18th century. Neither plant was operating at full capacity due to the war. The smaller factory in Hindenburgstraße was particularly at risk of being seized by the armed forces.

Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel therefore adopted a clever strategy. They concentrated Bleyle textile production at the larger factory in Wilhelm-Murr-Straße and located filter production in Hindenburgstraße. The original Bleyle Plant 2 thus became Mann + Hummel Plant 1 – and remained there for many decades. In June 1941, production of oil and fuel filters as well as air filters and intake silencers began. The around 200-strong workforce was made up of workers taken over from Mahle as well as from Bleyle. The plant was a mixture of machinery leased from Bleyle and Mahle, and the Mahle machines were bought in 1942. On June 30, 1942, the critical step towards a complete breakaway from Mahle was taken with the dissolution of the existing license agreement and the acquisition of the entire filter production business by Filterwerk Mann + Hummel for 1.2 million reichsmarks. The purchase agreement stipulated that Mahle would cease filter production.

# 1942 – 1945

Development of felt air filters



## INNOVATION DELIVERS RAPID GROWTH

Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel, neither of whom were engineers, entrusted the technical management of the filter plant to Alfred Wacker, a former knitting master of Bleyle, who brought drive and extensive technical knowledge to his new role. The company initially focused its production almost exclusively on commodities essential to the war effort, primarily filters for tanks, armored vehicles, and aircraft. Repairs on aircraft engine units were also carried out. Unsurprisingly, the workforce grew to over 1,000 in just a few years. Adolf Mann described the astonishingly rapid transformation from former textile firm to metal processing company in the Bleyle company bulletin in November 1941: "If you were to visit the filter plant today, either as a professional or as a layperson, you would be astonished at the refurbishment and extension work that has been completed in what used to be (Bleyle) Plant 2 in recent months. The humming sewing machines that could be heard earlier this year as women mass produced boys trousers has largely been replaced by men performing jobs such as turning, milling, welding, working on drawing presses, guillotine shears or in the spray paint shop to produce filters of all kinds [...]."<sup>6</sup>

The filter plant achieved rapid sales growth. This was due in no small part to strong demand from the army and the Luftwaffe as well as the company's innovative strength, which was reflected in numerous patent applications. Immediately after the takeover of filter production, the existing testing department at Mahle underwent major expansion and was adapted to meet the increased requirements of engine developers. This involved intensive cooperation between the testing department and the responsible authorities in the Wehrmacht. One of the major challenges they faced was reliable dust filtration during missions around the Mediterranean and in Africa as well as coping with extreme temperatures. Thus, in 1942, Adolf Mann declared that future work at the filter plant would focus on improving product characteristics, further expanding the development department, and rationalizing production. Showing remarkable vision, he also said that these items had a future and belonged to an area where there would be no shortage of activity, whether in times of war or of peace. As an example he cited the as yet untested alloy of wool and iron.<sup>7</sup>

Filterwerk Mann + Hummel was also an innovator in the civilian world, and was involved in the preliminary development of a car for the "Kraft durch Freude" organization, which went on to become the hugely successful Volkswagen Beetle in the post-war era.

As the Second World War came to an end with the unconditional surrender of Germany in May 1945, Filterwerk Mann + Hummel in Ludwigsburg had remained virtually unscathed by the bombings. However, the German economy had collapsed, and the future of the filter company founded just four years earlier looked more uncertain than ever.

## PRAGMATIC AGREEMENT WITH THE REGIME / The armament industry

Filterwerk Mann + Hummel was undeniably a "war baby". Had it not been for the demands of arms production, Mahle would never have outsourced its filter production to Mann + Hummel in the first place. The stated goal of the company founders was to ensure utilization of their plants through the production of commodities essential to the war effort. During the denazification process initiated against Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel after 1945, it was explicitly stated that their motives were entirely honorable. A report concluded: "Management could therefore not avoid production for the war effort. They reached a point where they had to get involved in wartime production in order to retain workers, premises, and machinery and to avoid losses."<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it was declared that textile company Bleyle had not been involved in arms production before war broke out in 1939. Nevertheless, the role played by management was ambiguous. The continuing war effort made home production necessary, particularly in the Bleyle plants. This strategy had a clear objective, which Adolf Mann described in a leaflet entitled "Rules for wartime home production" in 1944: "Any free operational capacity [...] is [...] being assigned to arms production. [...] Home production is only a partial solution to the greater problem of utilizing the workforce to its full capacity."<sup>9</sup> Regrettably, the efforts to resolve this problem included the use of forced labor. By the end of the war, there were around 200 forced laborers in Ludwigsburg. Mann + Hummel GmbH acknowledged its historical responsibility in this regard in 2000 and 2001 by participating in the German Industry Foundation Initiative established to provide compensation to forced laborers from the Third Reich, and made a significant contribution to the compensation fund. The Federal Government and more than 6,000 companies donated a total of 10 billion deutschmarks to the foundation.



#### THE FOUNDERS / Adolf Mann

Adolf Mann was born on February 21, 1890 in Altshausen, Baden-Württemberg. He was the fifth of six children. His parents ran a pastoral institute, which provided religious instruction to Protestant children and prepared them for confirmation. After leaving primary school, the gifted student attended the Latin schools in Saulgau and Kirchheim unter Teck, before continuing his education at the Protestant seminaries in Schöntal and Urach and eventually taking his final exams in 1908. Despite the death of his father in 1907, Adolf Mann enjoyed his "precious years at the seminary" and the "diverse and dedicated education, which he valued for the rest of his life as a precious gift".<sup>10</sup>



# Adolf Mann

**From educator to entrepreneur.** His career was by no means predestined. Coming from humble beginnings and of a pietistic nature, he initially worked as a math teacher. Adolf Mann quickly decided to change career and moved into industry, where he evolved into an energetic and visionary entrepreneur with a strong social conscience.

## FROM THE TEACHER'S DESK TO THE TRENCHES

After leaving school, the 18-year old entered the "Tübinger Stift" to study mathematics. The origins of this renowned Protestant house of study date back to 1536. Great emphasis is placed on providing a broad education encompassing philosophy, language, and music, with the aim of establishing a spiritual elite educated in accordance with Protestant beliefs. The Tübinger Stift has had many famous students pass through its doors. They include astronomer Johannes Kepler, philosophers Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Schelling, and theologian and poet Eduard Mörike. In addition to completing his studies in mathematics and teaching, Adolf Mann received a broad education in the humanities and the formation of values in the context of Christian social teaching at the seminary,

which had a major influence on him as an entrepreneur. In 1912, he passed his first in-service exam, and after spending a year as a student teacher in Stuttgart and Leonberg, the graduate took up his first teaching post in Heilbronn. By this time, the young Mann had already met and fallen in love with his future wife. In 1910, he met Elisabeth Gaiser, the daughter of a wealthy Stuttgart art dealer, and the pair became engaged in 1913. The upscale, sophisticated home of his fiancée's parents spurred the ambition of the young educator, and in the summer of 1914 he moved to a better paid position as a senior teacher at a private school in Godesberg. However, the storm clouds of the First World War that were gathering over Europe at the time thwarted the plans of Adolf Mann.



# 1943

Main flow oil centrifuge



**1916** / Adolf Mann was promoted to the rank of lieutenant.

In September he was drafted for basic training in Stuttgart, and in December he was transferred to the front line, close to the embattled town of Ypres. In May 1915, having in the meantime been promoted to sergeant, Mann became trapped while fighting on the front line and suffered a total rupture of both eardrums. He used his long period of convalescence as an opportunity to concentrate on personal matters, and in October 1915 he married his fiancée, Elisabeth Gaiser.

## LOVE LETTERS BECOME POIGNANT HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Back at the front, where he fought in the infamous Battle of the Somme and led a machine gun company, Adolf Mann – now a lieutenant – continued to write letters to his “Daisy”, as he affectionately called his wife, almost every day.

“Daisy” became his pet name for his fiancée and future wife after he was drafted into the army. It was also a symbol of their love for one another. When Adolf Mann found a daisy growing between two bomb craters at the



**LETTER FROM THE FRONT LINE** / One of 1,396 letters that Adolf Mann wrote to his "Dear Daisy" from the front line between 1914 and 1918.

front, he stuck it into his diary.<sup>11</sup> Adolf Mann composed 1,396 letters in all during the war – correspondence that documented not only his devotion to his wife, but also the true horrors of war.<sup>12</sup> In October 1916, he described how he narrowly escaped death: "[...] and I found it very difficult yesterday to accept that everything in our life, which has been so wonderful up to now, must be so pointlessly left to chance."<sup>13</sup> He often expressed doubts about the purpose of this mechanized war of attrition in his letters. On another occasion he wrote: "The French trenches are just 50 meters away. Yesterday, as a shell exploded opposite our position, I could hear the cries and groans of the wounded. I feel the same sympathy for everyone, whether they are friend or foe, as this murder is simply inhuman."<sup>14</sup>

Adolf Mann found the long periods of separation from his wife extremely difficult. In January 1917, he thus complained: "It pains me that our marriage still seems somehow incomplete, that we have nothing to show for it – such as our own household. [...] It is therefore an almost daily source of comfort to me that we do not yet have a child. I simply cannot imagine how I could bear the separation without losing my zest for life."<sup>15</sup>

The unimaginable became a reality for Adolf Mann in July 1918 with the birth of his daughter, Leonore. Despite his urgent pleas, he was denied leave from the front.

## FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Despite his misfortune, Adolf Mann survived the war and he returned to Stuttgart in November 1918. He joined the teaching staff of the Prag secondary school. Three years later, he reached a crucial turning point in his life. His wife, Elisabeth, was suffering from tuberculosis, and the costs of long-term treatment and stays in sanatoriums far exceeded his teacher's salary. Faced with such a difficult situation, it was a fortunate coincidence that Fritz Bleyle, together with his brother Max, owner of the textile factory of the same name, was looking for someone "who can count, who understands the balance sheet, and in whom he can have complete trust".<sup>16</sup> Adolf Mann fulfilled all of these criteria. What's more, he had fought in the trenches with Fritz Bleyle, and Elisabeth Mann's sister, Hanna, was married to him.



On May 1, 1921, Adolf Mann began working with the long-established Stuttgart company and was quickly promoted in various positions. After just two years he was given individual power of attorney. His professional success also translated into personal prosperity during the “Roaring Twenties”. The Manns employed a cook, a maid, and a nanny. By the time his second daughter, Sibylle, was born in 1927, Adolf Mann was well established in the upper echelons of Stuttgart society.

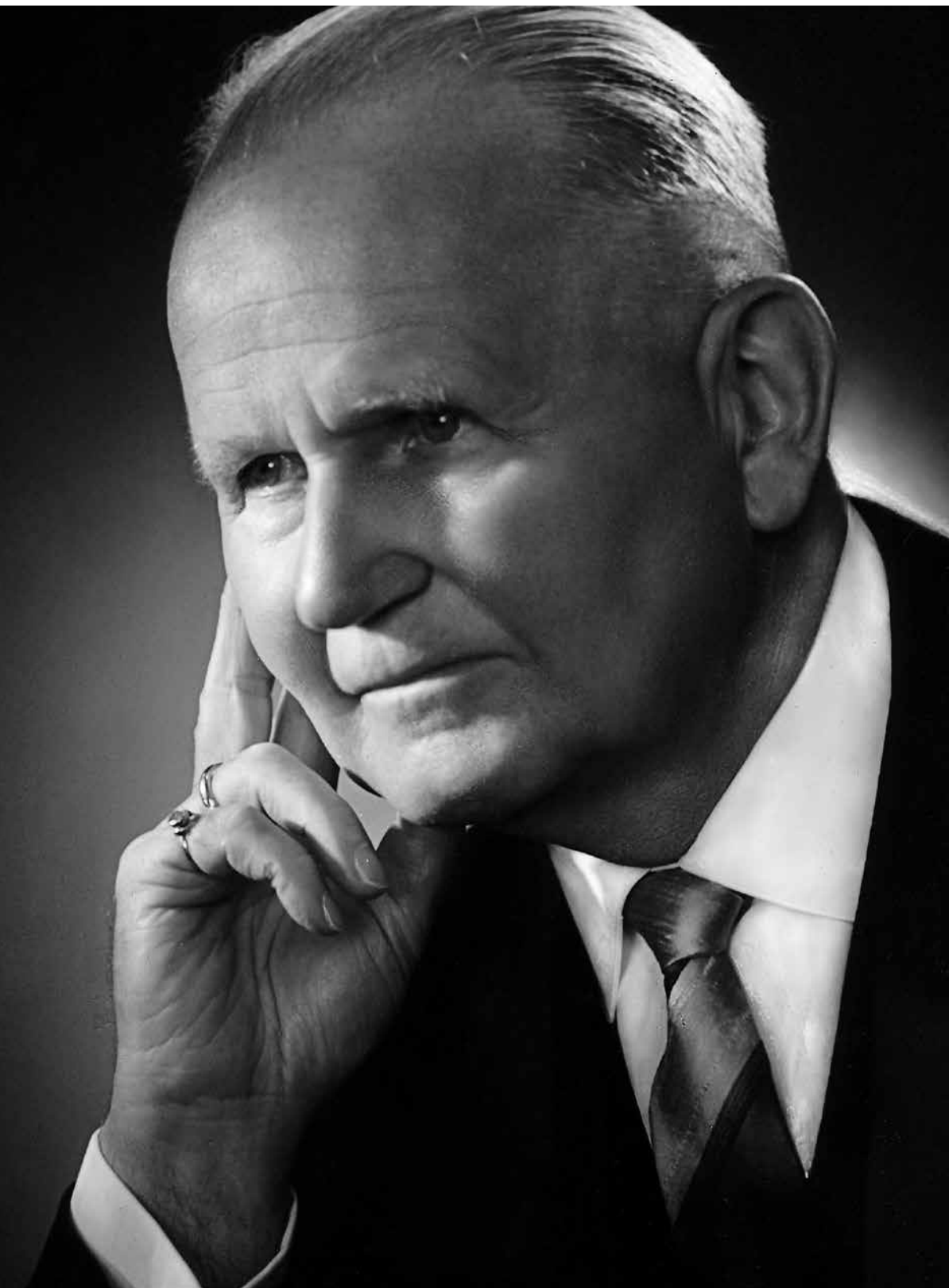
## ENTREPRENEUR AND SOCIOPOLITICAL ADVOCATE

Even as an entrepreneur, Adolf Mann remained a humanist committed to education with strong sense of mission. This was evident in even the smallest of details. His secretary recalled the following decades later: “He remained a schoolteacher all his life, correcting all letters and documents using a red pen.”<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, he was an extrovert with a healthy dose of self-awareness and tremendous drive. On the other, he took a great interest in philosophical and spiritual matters and was the perfect embodiment of the responsible, fatherly company

patriarch. Adolf Mann didn’t just confine his thinking to his own company. On lecture tours and in articles with titles such as “The role of man in modern industry” or “Work and leisure. Possibilities for personal development in modern industry”, Adolf Mann was actively engaged in discourse about sociopolitical issues in the 1950s.

In his spare time he read Goethe and Shakespeare and – thanks to his musical education – accompanied his wife on the piano as she performed songs by Hugo Wolff during musical evenings at their home. His relationship with religion remained ambivalent. In 1932, Adolf Mann and his wife left the Protestant church and over time developed a fascination with Catholicism. After the Second World War, he even allowed his new bungalow to be blessed by a Catholic priest. His daughter Sibylle believes, however, that he did not subscribe to any particular religion: “He was always a free thinker. He would never allow himself to be bound by restrictive rules or conditions.”<sup>18</sup>

This assessment aptly characterizes the fascinating life of Adolf Mann, which came to an end unexpectedly on July 16, 1971. The 81-year old suffered a heart attack and died the same day.



**ADOLF MANN** / Official portrait of Adolf Mann, probably dating from the 1950s.

# Dr. Erich Hummel

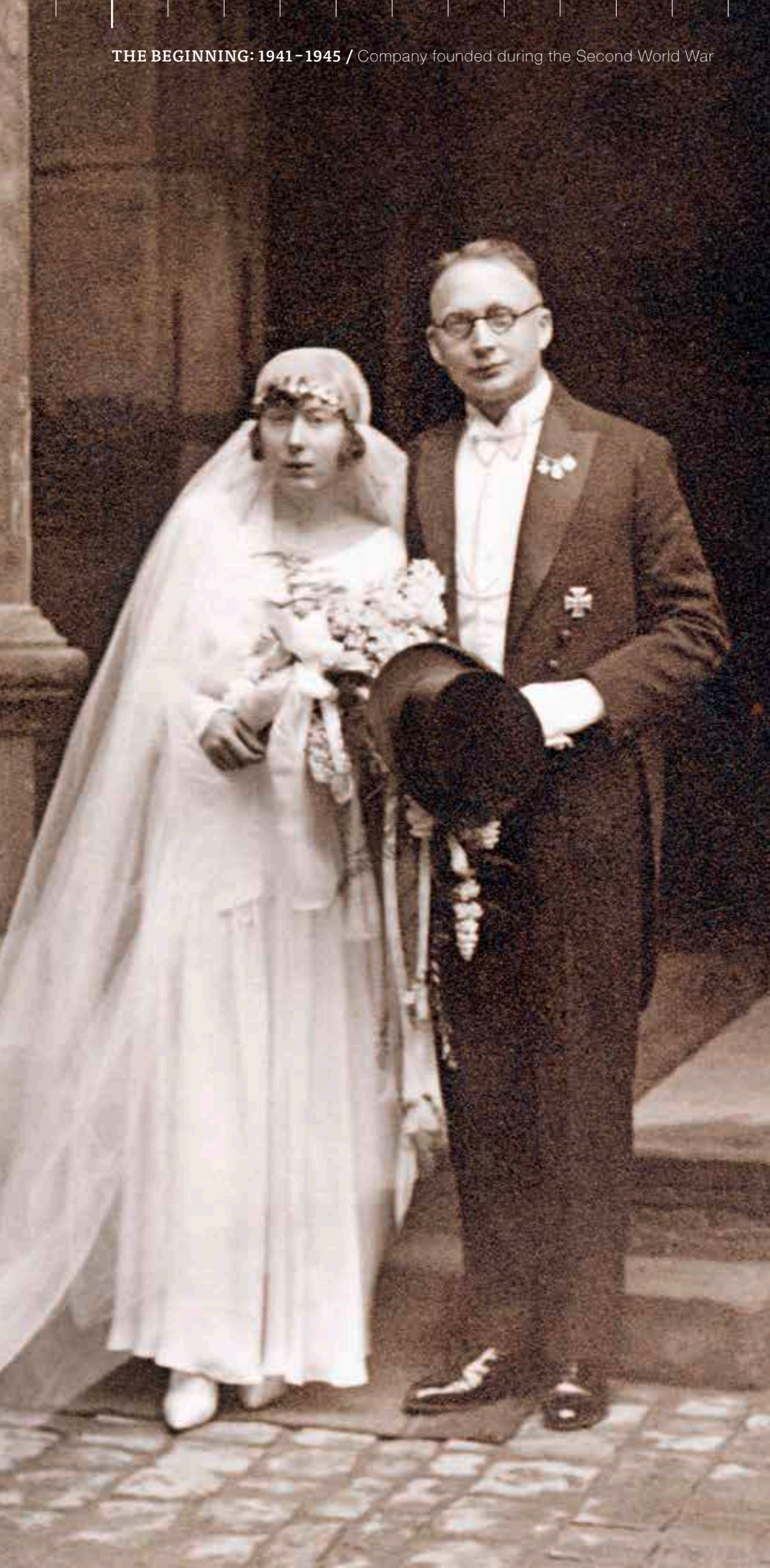
**The lawyer as an entrepreneur.** Before embarking on his legal studies, he would first have to complete a commercial apprenticeship and survive the First World War. After gaining his master's degree with a distinction in law, he failed to secure a job with the state and therefore went into industry instead. Dr. Erich Hummel employed his experience and skill in a wide range of areas and became the ideal partner for someone else who had decided to change careers.

## FROM TRAINING TO THE TRENCHES

Not long after completing his apprenticeship, Erich Hummel had to put all further career plans on hold. Like millions of others, he was drafted after the outbreak of the First World War and sent to the Western front. He was wounded four times, decorated numerous times, and eventually became a captain. During this time, he had a life-changing experience that would continue to haunt him many decades later. During combat, he exchanged places with a soldier from Randersacker in Franconia. Seconds later, his comrade was killed by a gun shot to the head. His son Gert recalls how his father “after the war and every evening later on in his life, would drink a glass of ‘Randersacker Teufelsmoor’ red wine in memory of his fallen comrade”.<sup>19</sup>

Erich Hummel was fortunate to survive the war. His officer's pension enabled him to return to his studies. Pursuing what he believed to be his natural “aptitude and talent”<sup>20</sup>, he decided to study law in Tübingen. It quickly became clear that he had made the right decision. He passed the first and second state examinations with distinction and in doing so qualified to join the state's judicial service. At the same time, he obtained a doctorate in jurisprudence with the distinction “summa cum laude” in October 1923.





#### THE FOUNDERS / **Erich Hummel**

Erich Hummel was born on October 26, 1893 in Schwaigern, in the district of Heilbronn. Like Adolf Mann, he was born into a Protestant family. His father was a respected pastor and later became a dean. As the daughter of a counsel at the University of Tübingen, his mother had high expectations when it came to education – expectations that Erich Hummel fulfilled with ease. At the Latin school in Schwäbisch Hall, he came top of the class in the school leaving examination. However, his father's financial means would only cover studies for two of his four sons. As the third born son, Erich was sent to stay with relatives in Hamburg, where he completed a commercial apprenticeship. This not only provided him with a solid foundation for his entrepreneurial activities in later years, but also took him to Antwerp, where the young trainee acquired his first experience in overseas trade and mastered the French language.

**1931** / Dr. Erich Hummel and Edith Heintzeler exchanged vows.



# 1944

Strainer disc (oil) filters with improved filter fineness compared with gap-type filter design

Despite his qualifications, he did not manage to pursue a career in the judiciary due to the prevailing political environment at the time. Just one month after he completed his studies, massive hyperinflation reached its peak in Germany. Even the most basic of foodstuffs cost millions of marks and vast cash assets were wiped out. Despite subsequent currency reform, the financial situation in the public sector remained precarious; even graduates with honors could not secure a state appointment. Following a brief interlude as a deputy judge in Heilbronn, the newly graduated Dr. jur. Erich Hummel therefore decided to try his luck in industry and joined clothing firm Wilh. Bleyle KG in Stuttgart as the then equivalent of a modern corporate lawyer. It was here that he first became acquainted with a colleague who had joined the company three years earlier after leaving the public service – Adolf Mann.

## CAREER IN INDUSTRY

The highly skilled lawyer certainly had his work cut out for him with his new employer. Twenty years later, he wrote in the company bulletin “Der Herold” of a “host of tasks including organizational issues, commercial structures, establishing the Bleyle brand on a solid legal and commercial footing, problems relating to financing and taxation, as well as general administration”.<sup>21</sup> With a combination of diligence, meticulousness, and his outstanding business acumen, Erich Hummel quickly made a name for himself at Bleyle.

In 1931, he married philologist Edith Heintzeler, who came from a wealthy manufacturing family. Their son, Jörg-Dieter, was born in the same year, followed by sons Gert and Rolf in 1933 and 1934 respectively. All three children went on to pursue notable academic careers.

When the Nazis came to power in January 1933, Erich Hummel maintained a quiet distance from them, and never embraced their ideology. Nevertheless, he joined the Nazi Party along with Adolf Mann in 1940. After the Second World War, he confirmed that this was a purely tactical maneuver made in order to protect the company.

Following the takeover of Bleyle and in particular after the formation of Filterwerk Mann + Hummel in 1941, Erich Hummel dealt with issues relating to industrial property rights in Germany and worldwide, the establishment of offices abroad, licensing, and later also the organization of foreign subsidiaries. His legal knowledge and the international commercial experience that he had gained from his apprenticeship was of great benefit to him. Providing a pension system for his workforce was also an important issue for him, and for many years he was chairman of the pension fund.

# 1944

Development of combi filters  
(felt cartridge with Feifel cyclones)



**DR. ERICH HUMMEL** / Official portrait of Dr. Erich Hummel, probably dating from the 1950s.

## A PASSION FOR LAW

Unlike his partner, Adolf Mann, Erich Hummel was an introvert. Despite being somewhat reserved in his interactions with others, he was always extremely courteous and did not think it beneath himself to “hold the door open for a trainee”.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, most of his achievements were focused within the company. His prudence, thoroughness, and correctness placed the company on a solid financial footing and he handled every issue with the same attention to detail. This made him the ideal partner for Adolf Mann, who tended to think in terms of the overall strategy. Always the lawyer, Erich Hummel approached problems “in a careful and considered manner [...] in as many variations as possible right through to their conclusion”.<sup>23</sup> He was what we would today refer to as a workaholic. His secretary of many years recalled that he “sometimes stayed at work until nine o’clock at night”.<sup>24</sup> Even at weekends and on vacation, he “[...] always had a briefcase full of documents with him”.<sup>25</sup>

A man passionate about law, Erich Hummel would happily sit discussing legal matters with his sons. Indeed, it became something of a family tradition, prompting his wife to “ban this practice on Sundays at least”.<sup>26</sup> His interests did, however, extend beyond law. As someone with a keen interest in local history, Erich Hummel was a member of the Württemberg history and antiquity association. He also enjoyed hiking, was a good photographer, and could “quote many Latin phrases”.<sup>27</sup> He and his partner, Adolf Mann, shared a passion for the visual arts.

The Hummel and Mann families spent a lot of time together, despite the fact that the company founders had very different personalities. Their relationship was “always conducted with a certain amount of distance [...]”. The “difference between them couldn’t have been any greater,” recalls one employee.<sup>28</sup> The differences in character sometimes led to tensions, but these could generally be resolved on the basis of trust, dependability, and loyalty because “a joint solution always had to be found for the sake of the company”.<sup>29</sup>

This was also true of the joint succession plan, which was a subject very close to Erich Hummel’s heart. When he died in 1984 at the age of 91, he already had plans in place to ensure that the company would continue to be run by the founding families. The founding families were represented at management level by Dr. Hermann Fischer, son-in-law of Adolf Mann, and by Erich Hummel’s son, Dr. Jörg-Dieter-Hummel. The life’s work of Erich Hummel was thus in safe hands.





**ANNIVERSARY SPEECH** / In 1966, Dr. Erich Hummel gave a speech to mark the 25th anniversary of the filter plant.



# Locations

**GERMANY / Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt** In the Stuttgart suburb of Bad Cannstatt, engineer Hellmuth Hirth founded a workshop for the development and construction of two-stroke engines in 1920. In the same year, businessman Hermann Mahle joined the fledgling company, and was joined shortly afterward by his brother, engineer Ernst Mahle. In the search for a profitable product, they came up with the idea of replacing the gray cast iron pistons normally used in engine design with light alloy pistons. The company began trading as Elektronmetall GmbH in 1924 and developed Germany's first controlled-expansion piston. In 1931, the company developed the aluminum ring carrier piston for diesel engines. Series production of oil, fuel, and air filters, which are of critical importance for high-performance engines, began in 1929. It was in Bad Cannstatt that the success story of light alloy pistons began – along with the rise of the technology firm, which had initially begun trading as Mahle KG in 1938, to become one of the top 20 automotive suppliers in the world. Today, Mahle employs over 75,000 employees at 170 locations worldwide. The company's headquarters are still based in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, where the company's history began back in 1920.



**STUTTGART-BAD CANNSTATT** / Piston manufacturer Mahle had been producing oil, fuel, and air filters at a plant in nearby Fellbach since 1929. Filterwerk Mann + Hummel took over this business in 1941.



**LUDWIGSBURG** / In Grönerstraße, Ludwigsburg, a plant measuring over 50,000 square meters produces air filters, intake manifolds, fuel and oil filters.

**GERMANY / Ludwigsburg** In this Baroque town near Stuttgart, the textile firm Bleyle run by Adolf Mann and Dr. Erich Hummel had two production sites. After taking over filter production from Mahle, Filterwerk Mann + Hummel moved to the textile factory in Hindenburgstraße in 1941. This turned out to be a good decision. With Daimler-Benz and Porsche in Stuttgart and NSU – which would later become Audi – in Neckarsulm, the company was surrounded by pioneers in technological and economic development. After 1945, the Central Neckar economic region, with its many innovative small and midsize companies and highly skilled workforce, became a driving force behind the economic miracle that was soon to follow. Although Mann + Hummel is now a global company with more than 60 locations worldwide, it is Ludwigsburg where the heart of the company still beats.

