Chapter 1
All about Hans von Leden
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It is not easy to write a biography of Hans von Leden (see Figure 1) either in a short chapter, or in a long one as a matter of fact, and the reader will soon discover why, but here we go. Just keep in mind that on November 20, 2013 Hans von Leden celebrated his 95th birthday (Figure 1). We presented him with a draft of these two volumes on February 28, 2014, when we visited him at his LA home. He was quite physically ill at that time, but mentally young as ever. On March 5, 2014, at about 7:00 AM Hans passed away.

Hans von Leden was born into a noble family on November 20, 1918 in the medieval Silesian city once called Vratislavia (Figure 2) when it was part of Bohemia. When this area was under German rule, it was called Breslau. This city was and is a capital of Lower Silesia, a part of Europe that experienced many rulers. When Hans was born, it belonged to Germany. At various other times it has also been part of the Kingdom of Poland, Bohemia, the Austrian Empire, and Kingdom of Prussia. Now it is again in Poland and the name of this beautiful city in the Polish language is Wrocław.

Figure 1. Dr. Hans von Leden at his desk at home in Los Angeles, CA. Taken on the occasion of his 95th birthday—November 20, 2013 (J. Doyle Photography, Los Angeles, CA).
Figure 2. A view of the city of Vratislavia (labeled Bressla in this 1493 woodcut from Liber Cronicarum also known as the Nuremberg Chronicle. From the private collection of KI.

Hans attended a local high school, and afterwards he spent a few years on the British Isles, before he moved to the USA in the late 1930s. Lucky for us, as more than 70% of his German HS friends perished in WWII battles. Upon arriving in the USA, Hans went to Medical School at the Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, graduating in 1941 at the age of 22, upon which he went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, to work in Laryngology and Plastic Surgery. In 1946 he was commissioned a US Navy officer by a special Act of Congress; at the time only those who had been US citizens for at least 10 years were commissioned in the US Navy.

After leaving the US Navy in 1950 where he was exposed to the ultra-high-speed camera and sophisticated air pressure studies, Hans moved to Chicago to work at Loyola, as a Professor at the Cook County Graduate School of Medicine. In 1952 he was invited to give a course on laryngology at the Pan Pacific Association in Hawaii, where his luck brought him and his wife to the same dinner table as that of the famous Dr. George Shambaugh, who upon returning to Chicago, offered him a position in Laryngology and Neck Surgery at the Northwestern University.

Hans married in 1949. His bride was the most prominent NYC model named Mary Louise Shaw. Her vocal folds and larynx are featured in Paul and Hans’ UHS films on the human voice that we review in Chapters 3 and 4 of this volume. The couple remained married until 2003, when Mary Louise succumbed in LA to a long and devastating illness, after battling it for 18 years with Hans always at her side.

Footnote: Ingo Titze, Ph.D., an internationally recognized voice scientist, an Executive Director of the National Center for Voice and Speech at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City (www.ncvs.org), and a professor at the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Iowa, who has also written hundreds of peer reviewed articles and several books on the human voice, was born in that region as well and lived in the Polish language this city is known as Jelenia Gora (a literal translation of Hirsch and Berg). When Ingo was there it was a part of Germany. When I spent many of my early years in this region, it was again a part of Poland. My town was a neighboring town of Jelenia Gora known as Cieplice in Polish, Bad Warmbrunn in German, or Therme in Latin.

Peculiarly, in the provincial capital of Lower Silesia, in the city of Hans’s birth place, Breslau (Wroclaw), the famous Dr. Wernicke of “Wernicke’s aphasia” also worked, lived and published.

One more regional “vocal science” trivia is now begging attention. Namely, Dr. Jan G. Švec, the “Kymography Guru,” lives and works about 120 km south-west of this region in the city of Olomouc in the Czech Republic.

Well, so is there something in that region’s air or water, or is it just serendipity that the four of us who come from this region: Hans, Ingo, Jan and I, all landed in vocology?
The married couple had a son and a daughter. Soon after their son was born, the family had to move from Chicago to Southern California because their son, Jon, needed to live in a different climate. They arrived in Los Angeles just in time for Hans to help start the new School of Medicine at UCLA. In 1966 Hans transferred his academic appointment to University of Southern California where he remained a Professor until his retirement.

In Los Angeles, Hans established The Institute of Laryngology and Voice Disorders, a host institution to many research scientists from all over the world. I met him there in the fall of 1971 on the roof of the parking lot of his office while I was attending UCLA (I moonlighted for Dr. Morton Cooper whose office was in the same building). Hans and I remained friends till the day of his death.

His academic achievements are remarkable. In his academic career, Hans authored or co-authored over 150 peer-reviewed articles, over 50 chapters and numerous textbooks. His CV covers at least 100 pages, and the reference list is impressive. For sake of this publication we are listing here only the three original references summarizing their ultra high-speed studies of the larynx [1-3].

He gave lectures on several continents more than 300 times. He received many scientific honors and awards and served on many Editorial Boards, and became a member of more than 30 scientific societies. Of course, we are mostly proud of his being a PVSF Board Member since its inception. The rest of his scientific history with regard to the VF is reported in this book.

There is also another profile to Hans’s past that is unknown to people in the voice sciences. Hans is equally well recognized for his service to mankind as he is to laryngology, phoniatrics and phonosurgery. Phonosurgery is the term that he actually coined, and he was introduced as “The Father of Phonosurgery” at the 2nd World Voice Consortium Congress in 1999 held in São Paulo, Brasil.

For more than 30 years Hans has served as a Grand Prior of America of the Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem, an international health charity order. For much of this time he was also the Grand Hospitaller of this charitable Order (Figure 3 shows Hans wearing the uniform of the order). In this capacity he has supervised acts of charity in different countries specifically in Central and Eastern Europe. I have seen many awards and medals in his home celebrating his contribution to the welfare of the society at large.

Figure 3. Hans von Leden in his mid-40's photographed in the uniform of the Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem.
References