The European trauma world lost a legend when Viennese surgeon and teacher Jörg Böhler passed away on December 11, 2005, just four days before his 88th birthday.

Jörg Böhler was born on December 15, 1917 in Gries near Bozen in the South Tyrol to Lorenz Böhler, founder of the modern trauma management, and his wife Leopoldine. He completed his medical studies in Innsbruck and Vienna and became a doctor of general medicine in 1941. The same year, he served the AUVA (Austrian Social Insurance for Occupational Risks) at the Arbeiterunfallkrankenhaus Webergasse, and completed his education as a specialist for trauma surgery in 1948.

In 1951 he was appointed Chairman of the UKH Linz, a position he held until the end of 1970. On January 1, 1971 he assumed management of AUKH XX, which was later relocated to the new “Lorenz Böhler Trauma Hospital” building in Vienna, and which he managed until the end of 1983.

In 1957 he received the venia legendi for surgery from the University of Vienna and was named outstanding professor in 1964.

The theme of his professorial dissertation was “The management of fresh hand injuries with particular consideration of the tendon”. Over 500 speeches worldwide, 360 publications as well as numerous text books made Jörg Böhler unforgettable.

In 1969 he was invited to hold the “Sterling Bun nell Memorial Lecture” at the University of San Francisco, a distinction that is only bestowed to the greatest hand surgeons in the world.

Jörg Böhler was an exceptional teacher. In his hand courses he put his knowledge and experience at our disposal with the use of all audio and visual possibilities. After his retirement, Jörg Böhler furthered his “Vienna Hand Course” to perfection and enormous dedication. He was repeatedly invited as an instructor and guest of honor at the Davos Courses. Besides his main focus of hand surgery, the areas of diagnostics and global polytrauma management as well as cranial injuries and burns were very close to his heart.

Jörg was a charismatic person. With his constant pursuit of quality and perfection in traumatology, he will always remain an unforgettable role model as a doctor and teacher. The loss for the trauma world and the AO is enormous, and impossible to put into words.

Saying goodbye to a European trauma legend

Jörg Böhler (1917–2005)