

## 50 Years of BILC

When I was asked to contribute a few words to the BILC anniversary I could hardly believe that BILC already has a history of 50 years to look back on. I had the honor, privilege and pleasure to be a part of the BILC family for almost 30 years and I gladly take the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you, the delegates at the 2016 Conference.



*Chris Huellen (1983)*

My first encounter with BILC was in 1983. I had completed my university education, had been drafted into the German Armed Forces and was doing my compulsory military service at the Bundessprachenamt teaching Russian. Germany had just taken over both BILC Chair and Secretariat from the UK. Josef Rohrer was Chairman and the late Herbert Walinsky was Secretary. It was Germany's turn to organize the annual conference and Herbert had the idea that there should be a bar, where delegates could have a drink (or two) before lunch. As it turned out, I won the lottery and found myself pouring the drinks for all those hardworking delegates at lunchtime. The head of the French delegation was a colonel. I was most impressed by the career and personality of an officer who had been completely blind since his jeep drove on a mine somewhere in Africa when he was a young lieutenant. When I poured him a drink on the first day of the conference he asked me what I would like to have.

I told him that I was on duty and not allowed to drink. He very calmly asked me whether I knew his rank. I answered "Yes - Colonel - Sir". He smiled and said: "Okay, and now you are going to have a drink with me." Which I did.

It seems "Work hard and play hard" was a BILC motto already in the 1980s.

I guess everybody who has been involved with BILC has stories like this to tell. They tend to emphasize the "play hard" bit, perhaps because we language people remember situations like that better than other people and love to retell them. This is a lot of fun (as quite a few contributions in the BILC Facebook community show every day). But of course there is also the serious BILC side. During my time as BILC delegate, assistant BILC Secretary and BILC secretary from 1983 to 2013 I think I have been able to come up with something I call the "BILC pattern":

- BILCers integrate newcomers into the community from the very first day.
- BILCers are always willing to learn from each other.
- BILCers are always willing to share their insights.
- BILCers are proud of their contribution to the defense community.
- BILCers are confronted with the same questions about standards, levels, proficiency, aptitude, teaching and testing methods - you name it - again and again - and still try to find an even better answer.
- BILCers know that language matters.

So stick to the pattern! Keep up the good work! Start working on the next 50 years of BILC! Enjoy it!

Live long and prosper!

Herzliche Grüße

Christopher Hüllen



*Chris Huellen (2014)*