

them to copy the latest films and then sell them off“, he admits.

“Did you also steal parts?”

He is silent, thinks for a moment and laughs. “Of course.”

After two years at Grundig, Siegfried and two colleagues took the master craftsman's exam as a television technician. "Perhaps for reasons of group dynamics, I didn't think about a career between my 20s and 30s. If someone had a cool idea, I tried to be there and thought: it's not right that he has a master's degree and I don't. Suddenly, after a year, I had my master's certificate, no job, and was pretty exhausted from studying. I've often done things in life that weren't well thought out, but strangely enough, they usually turned out extremely well. If you call that luck, I've had a hell of a lot of luck in life."

Siegfried decided to enjoy his unemployment for a year, helped out a little here and there, and went to Spain with a friend. His relationship suffered

because of his laissez-faire attitude. After the holiday, Siegfried told his girlfriend: "I don't think we're going to work out." She agreed. "After a few weeks, however, we approached each other again, remorseful." He smiles. They both financed a shared apartment, and Siegfried found a job.

"Suddenly I was an apprentice trainer at the Triumph Adler company, which built typewriters, and later electrical, electronic and computer machines. I never thought that I couldn't do the job, I was pretty confident in myself, but I couldn't do it and I made tons of mistakes. You learn on the job, go with each year of apprenticeship." He grins.

*Apparently his self-confidence has not suffered as a result of his unemployment. He seems to be dancing through life with no effort at all, I think.*

"I enjoyed teaching young people who looked up to me. But I can't do anything in my life that is stable for very long, that's too boring for me, actually I have a three-year rhythm", he says. After a few years he was already planning to leave. "You

always have to develop further in life. Learning never stops. On top of that, during that time I had by far the worst and most nasty boss of my life. When I think of him today, a few emotions still come up. Sometimes I imagined punching him in the face. That helped for a short time. I learned from him how not to do it - professionally and personally. His bullying of apprentices and me was not good for my self-esteem. I couldn't sleep because of the stomach pain. When he offered me a termination contract after a few years, I turned it down because I thought I wouldn't be able to find a job. I think I lived to be 30 at the company, but the boredom wore me out. I married Christa when I was 28 because that's what you do, other people got married too, we had been together for eight years and she wanted a child before her 30th birthday."

*Maybe at that age you copy what seems to be normal. You could also call it the start of a middle-class life, I think. It doesn't fit with the Siegfried I'm getting to know.*

“How did you get out of the company without becoming depressed or sick?”, I’m interested.

"I got out in 1988. I read a job advertisement from an American electronics company in the local newspaper. Looking back, it's crazy what was going through my mind at the time. The company was called CIMM, and they were looking for a sales manager for Europe. I thought to myself, I'd apply." He slaps his thigh with the palm of his hand and laughs heartily. "I think I got the rejection the next day. That was obvious. But they said they might come back to me later. After a few weeks, they actually wrote to me and offered me a job as a product manager. During the conversation, I didn't understand anything at all, just that I would have the opportunity to come to the USA. That wasn't really that attractive to me at the time. My birthplace, Vilseck, is home to the largest American garrison in Germany, so I had ambivalent feelings about the Americans. But I saw the opportunity to get out of the job I hated and travel", he remembers.

“How are your English skills?”, he was asked in the interview.

"I grew up in Vilseck. 20,000 Americans live there. I don't think that's an issue", Siegfried said nonchalantly and got the job.

*I know the situation. What makes you act like that in that moment? Is it the desire to try something out playfully, or the courage to take a risk and accept the risk of failure, or simply the inner urge to seize the next opportunity that promises further development and greater freedom?*

“Just quit on Monday and fly to the USA for us on Wednesday”, his new boss offered.

"I couldn't speak any English at all anymore and I bought myself a few English books“, admits Siegfried, laughing at his own chutzpah. "I flew on the Boeing 747 that was hanging as a poster in my childhood bedroom – it was a great feeling. Years later, I went up the spiral staircase for the first time. Perhaps it was precisely because things went well back then that my life developed in such a way that

I often took the risk of starting something that I had no idea about. And I really rocked it. The boss was younger than me and had faith in me. Everything was good, a great team. I was responsible for a certain product that I had to get ready for the German and European market and get approved."

Siegfried Kreuzer regularly flew to his American colleague, Bob Roberts, with whom he had a life-long friendship. "He was always obese, could not walk 300 metres, and was a very kind person. He always introduced me as the 'King of Bavaria' and on my second visit he made sure that a poster with the inscription 'The king is back' hing", he says laughing. "He died three years ago. His grandparents came from Germany and emigrated to the USA. 'Schmeiss aussi ', Bob once said in his best dialect when he declared a pile of papers in his office ready for the wastepaper basket", Siegfried says. Back in Germany, he even did genealogical research for his friend, made phone calls, found part of the family in Bavaria and was able to re-search the origins of Bob's grandparents from

Bohemia. "They didn't come from Bremen, as he had understood, but actually not far from my father's hometown. Since then, Bob and I have not only been friends, but have considered each other nephew and uncle, kindred spirits, so to speak. Predicate: human." He smiles, touched.

"At the beginning, I didn't understand much of the job, either linguistically or technically, and just tried to figure out what it was all about. I was glad that I had an office to myself where I could stammer on the phone unnoticed. I usually asked for a fax to be sent to me so that I could translate and understand it in peace." He laughs. "The job interested me, the business trips fascinated me, and suddenly a network of collaborations emerged. At the time, our first child was on the way."

We treat ourselves to a lunch break at an Italian restaurant. I forgot my recording device in the apartment. "No problem, we'll take my cell phone. You can even record a podcast with it", Siegfried Kreuzer offers, encouraging me to make my dream of living by the sea come true. "How many

books do you write a year? Then just fly from Greece to your customers a few times a year, just like you drive to them from Essen today. You're flexible", he suggests as a solution.

*He enjoys it, he is completely in his element, and I have the impression that everything could be very easy. He opens up possibilities with ease. That feels good.*

"As long as my mother is still alive, that won't work. After that, I'll think about it again", I say, and am grateful to him that this perspective suddenly feels tangible to me.

He bought a house on La Gomera to enjoy more peace and quiet in nature. "My life has only taken place in big cities and airports, and Gomera was the only less crowded island that interested me, far away but still part of Europe." He puts a large tomato sauce stain on his shirt and interrupts himself: "If only my wife could see this now. That happens to me so often and I always have to think of



Loriot's scene with the noodle." We have a great time, like old friends.

*I believe he has a gift for friendship, a beautiful trait that certainly makes his life easier.*

I really liked the first house on La Gomera that I found on the internet. I flew there to have a look – beautifully situated, on a hillside, eight terraces, panoramic views of the sea, with a view of Tenerife. In the evening I was standing at the bar in a Pub and got chatting to a German woman who had lived on La Gomera for 30 years. It turned out that we came from the same place and she even knew my mum. Unbelievable. She introduced me to her Berlin friend, who told me straight away that I wanted to buy a house and had an appointment with a real estate agent, because it was his house. The others who were standing there were tenants in the separate holiday apartment in the house. Such coincidences happen a lot in my life. But that only works if you talk to people and are curious“, explains Siegfried. "He then showed me the house, we drank a lot, and he offered me his guest

room. So I was able to sleep in the house on the first day. The next morning he showed me the island and told me that he didn't want to sell the house. We spent a few days together and sent the estate agent away. 'You 're a good person, if I ever sell it, it'll be to someone like you,' he finally offered. Two months later we met again and agreed on the purchase price. At the same time, I was diagnosed with heart disease and would need surgery in a year, while my then partner had a tumor in her knee. We figured we could both work independently from La Gomera and I bought the house in November 2016“, he recalls.

Siegfried Kreuzer sealed the new chapter by buying a VW Van, which he drove alone through Switzerland, France and Spain to La Gomera. "We did a handover in the house, I left the Van there and flew back. Four weeks later, contrary to the agreement, the house was completely empty and I had to buy some furniture for the first holiday guests. I never lived there. First I thought about which parts

of my job I could change so that I could work from there.

I don't see myself as a consultant who just sets up cost-saving programs. I'm the person who creates jobs and increases the agility and competitiveness of companies. I've developed a document with 75 questions that examine six areas in the company: customer approach, customer management, relationship management, processes and methods, tools and leadership. I can derive an objective picture from the answers if I understand how things are linked", he explains enthusiastically. "I learned many methods at the American company Miller-Heiman and then started my own business on the subject. We had around 400 consultants there, and I was one of those who made the most sales. For me, money is a result of a good job, not a goal. My talent? I'm a good listener."

I have to laugh.

"It's not so clear today. It's just not my job", he says mischievously. "When I listen to the customer,

their story is combined with my experience in my head until I understand what the challenge is. Then I summarize everything in five sentences with my own words, and people think that's brilliant. I can keep my mouth shut, think analytically, sort things out. Of course, I've also developed my own things like this assessment or a communication model with four quadrants: I get information, I give information, mental image, solution. And the one who asks, leads. I have to understand what someone wants to achieve or avoid or regulate in/with his current challenge and develop an idea for how to make it happen. That's the art."

He even recommended that his son use the model when he told him about communication difficulties with his doctoral supervisor. "After two weeks, he was able to wrap him around his finger", he says, not without pride.

I don't think much of communication models and pick up the loose thread again: "Why didn't you move to La Gomera?"

After I separated from my wife I was alone for six months. I'm not a person who is good on my own. Then I met Melanie when I organized one of my ultra runs and she interviewed me as a local Journalist afterwards. I enjoyed developing something new. In 2005, my children's project was just getting started and I was able to combine the run with the charity for the project. Melanie wasn't interested in me at first when she found out that I was married and had two children. Nobody noticed that I was already separated at that time because I was always on the road anyway. At some point, someone told her that I wasn't doing well after separating from my wife and we got together. Did I love my ex-wife? In a way, yes. Did I love Melanie? It was more like an escape into a new adventure“, he says looking back.

*That wasn't an answer to my question. He'll probably have to make a big detour to get back to the answer of my question, I tell myself.*

The noise level in the restaurant increases, we drive back to my place.

"We separated in 2011, and I sold the company in 2013. Amberg, my hometown, somehow became too small for me. Melanie and I were able to spontaneously view an apartment in the old town of Regensburg and rented it. The fact that she was unable to fulfill her wish to have children with me caused more and more conflict over time. Although the diagnosis of her knee tumor was positive, our relationship fell apart. She became more and more esoteric and trained as a healer because she believed she had cured herself of cancer. I couldn't stand hearing that anymore. Of course I can go to meta levels and am convinced that we are only scratching the surface of our reality here, but we simply no longer had anything in common. Finally we separated", he remembers.

"I would have been away then – at the sea", I try again in the hope of getting an answer to my question.

"During the time when she was so ill and had acquired a healing dog that could never be controlled on the plane to La Gomera, I bought a huge RV",

he continues. "Another attempt to save this relationship. Unfortunately, I was mostly traveling alone or by plane to La Gomera. In May 2019, I returned from the Philippines, where I often spent my birthday with the Hayag children's project. Three young people there made a documentary about the project for me, and I financed their trip. I went on vacation for another week; I wanted to get away from home. After I returned, I suggested Melanie to split up and asked her to find an apartment by the fall. I drove around Germany in the RV over the summer, and from September I wanted to go to La Gomera", he admits. "I have always suffered from the separations, and I still feel like I've lost my nest. One summer evening I went out to eat with a good friend in Regensburg and then went to a bar where my friend Joachim was already sitting with a couple having a glass of wine. I got chatting to the woman from Austria, but when the man said goodbye and left with his dog, it became clear to me that they were not a couple and did not even know each other. Suddenly I saw

the woman in a completely different light. She was very nice and attractive and gave me her business card." He grins.

"The evening ended with us going to another bar and me chatting to the Austrian until the bar closed. After I accompanied her to her hotel, we arranged to meet again every day and on the third evening I noticed that there was something going on between us. She invited me to visit her in Austria while she was on vacation a couple of weeks later. I had time and only worked with clients who were good for me. So I drove to her in Vorarlberg, without the camper van of course. I did n't want to sleep in the RV." He laughs.

Siegfried made the day-to-day principle an agreement. He asked Andrea to tell him every evening whether he should go home the next morning or stay another day. In return, Andrea organized everything imaginable to give him an unforgettable day: bike tour, hiking tour, mountain hut, vintage car exhibition in Lindau. Siegfried even managed



to get the last two tickets for the “Bregenzer Festspiele” just before the performance began.

"It's also nice that I don't always have to be the locomotive. On the last day I met her two children and asked them if I could come back. 'Fix' confirmed her pubescent daughter, Ella, which in Vorarlberg means 'but for sure' – an honor to me. We then had a long-distance relationship for a while, until the political Corona regulations a few years ago made border crossings impossible and I stayed in Austria for a few weeks. At some point we did a bit of remodeling in the house and moved in together. We have no doubt that we will grow old together. Since I met Andrea, I have known unconditional love." He is lost in thought.

He came through his heart operation well, even though there were a few complications. "In 2017, I had no problems when my cardiologist wanted to operate on me. A friend recommended another cardiologist for a second opinion, who advised me to carry on with my life as normal for now and to come for a check-up once a year. The third one I

saw examined and tested me in detail and only recommended further observation every nine months. I then presented both doctor's reports to my first cardiologist, who apologized and agreed with his colleagues. So I was able to wait a few years. It was only recently that I noticed that it was time for the operation because of my shortness of breath when walking, and I had an extremely competent doctor who assured me that we would find the right time months in advance. At the last check-up on May 24, we set the date for the operation for heart valves, aortic aneurysm and bypass at the Regensburg Heart Clinic for September. In August I was able to go on a road trip through the USA with Andrea, and after the holiday I went to the clinic“, he remembers.

“Were you afraid of the operation?”, I ask.

"No, in retrospect I have to say: thank God not. Because the operation was the most underestimated event of my life“, he answers. "Not all of my friends knew about it, Andrea was the person to contact for information. I remember joking with the