

Hello everybody,

You have seen the telescope at the entrance. It is an old Maksutov -Telescope. And I tell you, when I was a 9 year old child it beamed me within a second so close to the moon : amazing, unforgettable.

My name is Jacqueline Küenzi. I am pleased to welcome you, and I would like to tell you a tiny bit about this telescope, the observatory in which it was located and the builder of the observatory, Karl Küenzi. I'm his daughter.

Let me start with my father. He was born 1930 in a small village in the countryside, in the Zurich Oberland, called Sternenbergr (mountain of stars). At that time the villagers were poor, including his parents; Education was meager, thinking was shaped by religious belief and superstition, and everything scientific was viewed with suspicion.

Nevertheless, my father was already as an 11/12-year-old boy interested in sciences and asked about the origin of the universe.

I remember - it was a beautiful clear night, we were sitting on the hill where the observatory stands and he told me:

„As a child I used to sit here quite often, looking at the beauty of the cosmos, and I asked myself: how did all that come into being, You know, I never believed in god and all those fairy tales they were telling in church and school.“

„The best part of my childhood,“ he said, „was this huge, star-studded sky and of course, my dog“.

He told me, while they gazed at the stars they ate doughy pears - yes, also the dog - because they were so hungry as most of the time. He had to work a lot. His parents also loaned him out to other farmers, already at the age of six, and they always received something in return for his work. They treated him like.. well.... in Switzerland you would say ..Verdingbueb.... kind of labour child, slave child...

He wanted to go away. So he learned French with a French vocabulary and grammar book. Those books he bought with the first money he had earned from selling the pelts of moles.

When his parents did not allow him to attend a higher school, despite his good grades and the teacher's recommendation, he kind of escaped to French-speaking Switzerland. There he completed an apprenticeship as a bricklayer.

He couldn't study at university. But as an autodidact, he acquired an immense knowledge of civil engineering, astronomy, geology, history, and classical music, especially Italian operas.

In the 1960s, he worked as head buyer for the Piatti construction company in Zurich, we also lived in Zurich. He had long harbored the idea of building an observatory in

Sternenberg, about 900 meters above sea level, hardly any air or light pollution, close to Zurich, simply perfect.

Finally, one day in 1965 he received the crucial call from a work colleague:

„Carlo ciao, listen, we're demolishing something here, and there's a round skylight, about 5 meters in diameter, made of fiberglass-reinforced polyester. Wouldn't that be something for you?“

Yes, it was. And then things began to move. His friends at work transported the white dome to Sternenberg, and with a winch, it was pulled up to our hill, called Schatzbühl, (treasure hill).

My father drew up the construction plans. Then, with the help of friends and family he built the observatory for this Maksutov telescope. Already before, he had made contact with Eugen Popp, who manufactured those telescopes in Ricken.

The following I found in the Internet :

The Maksutov telescope features a sophisticated mirror system with high image quality and was invented in 1942 by the renowned Russian optician and astronomer Dmitri Maksutov.

Eugen Popp personally calculated and manufactured the optics for his Maksutov telescopes. He was considered a master at perfectly coordinating the entire optical system, and his telescopes became famous in the 1960s and 70s for their exceptional sharpness and contrast.

Those telescopes were quite expensive. So, Eugen Popp and my father made a deal. Eugen Popp could use the observatory to demonstrate his telescope to interested buyers and in return my father could buy the borrowed Maksutov at a low price, after a certain time.

There were many guided tours at the Sternenberg Observatory, so many people looked through this telescope to admire the moon, the planets and travel a little way into space – from 19'66 to 20'13. Then it was replaced by a Celestrone –which offers more possibilities– but it was this Maksutov that first beamed me towards the moon. Therefore, I'm happy that it's now here and – even if no one will look at the sky with it anymore - it will still be looked at.