

Holger Keppel's new book : *From City Hall to Retirement - Stories from Yesterday and Today, Planning Satires and Everyday Stories*

Dr. Holger Keppel, long-time mayor of Rottenburg and Malawi activist, has presented a new book: a collection of cheerful anecdotes from his life. As mayor of Rottenburg, Holger Keppel "occasionally polarised, and in the right places also provoked. He pointed out gaps in logic, asked questions, and sometimes got into trouble," writes Rottenburg's mayor Stephan Neher in his welcome address. The two worked together for more than three years before Keppel retired in 2011. The former mayor of Rottenburg and former head of the town planning office has now anecdotally compiled some of his experiences, both professional and private, in the book "Vom Rathaus in den Ruhestand" (From Town Hall to Retirement). Last week he presented this "Rottenburg local history book of a special kind" (Neher) at the home of publisher Ernst Heimes.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, Keppel describes experiences from his professional life, rarely without a twinkle in his eye. In the second part, he describes everyday stories from the time since he no longer belongs to Rottenburg's town hall leadership. Consequently, the cover shows the illuminated window of his study on the market square (lighter!) and next to it a sunset in Malawi - Keppel has been involved in the Southeast African country for several years and is chairman of the association Malawi Freunde Rottenburg.

In order to write down the stories of the first part, the 69-year-old did not have to rummage through his memory. He began putting his political satires on paper years ago. So far, he has only told them to his friends. Now, for the first time, he is making them accessible to a wider public. Instead of using real names, the author sometimes uses pseudonyms he has created himself. But anyone who knows a little about Rottenburg's recent history and does a bit of deduction here and there will easily recognise the actors. Thus, behind Jean "Leppek" - read backwards - the author himself shines through. As a newcomer to Rottenburg, he meets the "ruling consul Sonnenfest", whose name is suspiciously reminiscent of the mayor Egbert Regenbrecht, who was in office until 1979.

Those were the days: When Holger Keppel took up his post in the town planning office in 1978, smoking was still allowed in the town council! And because the building mayor himself smoked; it was he who was sent to the French twin town of St. Claude by OB Löffler on the occasion of the European Pipe Congress. "Apparently no one had noticed that I had stopped smoking a fortnight before," the author writes - and continues: "so once again." Keppel has stopped smoking and started again several times since then.

Keppel is downright visionary in another story. While still in Mannheim, he drew one of his first construction plans for a planned tax office - lovingly and neatly with ink pens, as was still customary at the time. Suddenly his boss is looking over his shoulder. Just as the young man is about to proudly present his work, the boss says: "What are you doing? You've drawn the grain of wooden columns." But you're building with reinforced concrete! "I must have been ahead of my time," Keppel writes. At the moment of the event, however, he could not be very happy: "And then I was allowed to scratch out the wood grain again with a razor blade! That was almost like punishment work!"

Keppel garnished the end of the story with a smiley. Such smiles - rather unusual in literature - adorn several passages in the book. His sister-in-law, who edited it - as did his wife - consistently cut out these depictions of emotion. The author, of course, reinserted them all. Keppel and conventions? That would be a laugh!

At the press conference, the author also revealed why the cover of the book is Bordeaux red. At the time, Rottenburg's head of office had recommended a brown pen for signing documents. But Keppel insisted on a Bordeaux red pen, "because I am a Bordeaux fan". No wonder, then, that he wore a Bordeaux-red scarf on that day. And even today, Bordeaux-red window frames in the Museum car park are a reminder of Holger Keppel's favourite colour.

The book is published by Haus am Nepomuk in Rottenburg. It has 92 pages and costs 25 euros. The proceeds will go to the Malawi Freunde Rottenburg association.

Holger Keppel was born in 1951 in Rastatt and grew up in Mannheim. He studied architecture and was head of the Rottenburg town planning office from 1978 to 1991. After that, he was mayor of construction for 20 years until he retired in 2011. Having already been involved in Malawi as a senior expert for the federally funded SES/Bonn, he founded the Malawi Freunde Rottenburg in 2013 to provide development aid in the Southeast African country. *Source: Rottenburger Post, 11 May, 2021*

