



— RAMONA HÖNL

## "When the laser ignited, we all hugged each other"

May 16 is the international day of light. It was on exactly this day 60 years ago, that the American physicist Theodore Harold Maiman generated the very first laser beam. 25 years later, TRUMPF ignited the very first laser that it itself developed. That was a milestone for German industry. Nowadays, industrial manufacturing without the laser would be simply unthinkable - in automotive production, medical technology and smartphone production. Gerd Duffke, who has been at TRUMPF for 48 years now, currently working in the Corporate HR Learning + Development Department, was there in the sealed-off hall as all the champagne corks popped.

### Mr Duffke, how important was TRUMPF's decision to build its own laser in the 80's?

Berthold Leibinger, the then CEO of TRUMPF, saw a lot of weaknesses in the lasers on the market at that time. We had one problem after another with the beam guidance and cutting quality. But even at that time, high processing precision was crucial, because we wanted to follow up on the good reputation that our punching machines and nibblers enjoyed. Berthold Leibinger's idea of us building our own laser was the only way we saw to succeed with this technology in industry.

### Did you have hesitations when you heard about these plans?

No. As a TRUMPF service engineer, I had already gained experience with lasers from other manufacturers in the late 70's. I had an idea of what was possible with the laser. It cut geometries that punching machines couldn't. What's more, I had confidence in TRUMPF's inventive talent.

### What were the development challenges?

There were barely any physicists in our team. Most of us just had a technical background. For us, a lot of the laser development was unknown territory. We were really motivated, though, and got some training from Hüttinger, a company that now belongs to the TRUMPF Group. This is how we gained the physics knowledge and the technical radio frequency know-how which we needed to tackle the challenges of the laser.

» **We were like a group of mountain climbers. We worked together until we finally got to the top.**



