



# special

Cellular rubber | Cellular polyethylene | Sponge rubber | Fluid sealants | Solid rubber | Special products | Filter technology



- ▶ **1938-1982**  
Wilhelm Köpp  
**Founding and development**
- ▶ **1983-2007**  
Werner Köpp  
**Expansion and progress**
- ▶ **2007-2013**



Oliver Köpp  
Achim Raab  
**Change and growth**



Preserving its identity

# History of a family firm

## From a trade house to a limited liability company

When Wilhelm Köpp founded a business for trading sponge rubber under the name of WILHELM KÖPP CELLULAR RUBBER in Aachen on 1 September 1938, he laid the very foundation for his life's work. The staff of ten who had undoubtedly embarked on this venture full of optimism were soon put to the test by the outbreak of the Second World War soon afterwards. This was followed by evacuation of the company in 1944, initially to the town of Goslar, and then to Kemberg near Wittenberg-Lutherstadt. However, two years later Wilhelm Köpp was able to return to Aachen with his firm and make a fresh start. Despite all the confusion of the post-war period his little firm succeeded in gaining a foothold. Development of the business was accompanied by relocation within Aachen to various premises of ever-increasing size. After setting up first at Jakobstraße and then at Lütticher Straße, the workforce of the limited partnership, which meanwhile numbered 60 people, finally moved to the firm's current site in Aachen-Haaren in 1963.

## Resistant to crises thanks to diversity

From this time the company enjoyed steady growth under the management of Wilhelm Köpp. This was above all due to his strategy of keeping his eyes firmly fixed on the future and constantly watching out for new business opportunities. This is how he came to set up the Filtering Technology department in 1965. After taking over the firm Eichsfelder Moosgummiwarenfabrik Rudolf Haupt, previously a supplier of sponge rubber profiles and mouldings to his company, Wilhelm Köpp then himself embarked on the manufacture of these materials. The branch office at Bovenden near Göttingen has since then carried out production under the name of WILHELM KÖPP ZELLKAUTSCHUK KG. Activities in the cellular rubber segment were then stepped up

Activities in the cellular rubber segment were then stepped up with the founding of the firm Schaum und Elastomer GmbH und Co. KG in Berlin. Wilhelm Köpp understood that, in increasingly difficult times, he could only ensure the growth and independence of his company in the long term if the firm manufactured semi-finished products itself. His motto was 'Resistant to crises thanks to diversity'. A corporate strategy that has to date proved effective, as demonstrated by the dynamic development of the business. When in 1983 he handed over management of WILHELM KÖPP ZELLKATTSCHUK GmbH to his son Werner Köpp, the firm boasted a workforce of some 130 staff. Until he retired in 1988, Wilhelm Köpp was the driving force behind development of his business for half a century, so making the firm into what it is today.

## "A truly honest businessman"

This is how Gert Schneiders remembers Wilhelm Köpp



Gert Schneiders was employed at KÖPP from 1962 – 2005, including as head of sales and company officer.

When Gert Schneiders entered the company in 1962, he had already known Wilhelm Köpp for several years. In 1950 his mother became Wilhelm Köpp's second wife, so joining this family from Aachen together with her son Gert. "Wilhelm Köpp had completed an apprenticeship as a bank clerk in Hamburg, which meant that he had learnt his trade starting right at the bottom", recalls Gert Schneiders. "He was renowned for his honesty. He never took so much as a light bulb home when he needed one. For him this was quite unthinkable. We should

also remember that Wilhelm Köpp was personally liable for failure of the business with his own assets – something he took for granted", comments Gert Schneiders, still visibly impressed by this attitude.



**With his eyes firmly fixed on the future**  
Where the success of the company is concerned, Gert Schneiders has a simple yet obvious explanation. "Wilhelm Köpp never bothered himself with the business of the day. He always saw the bigger picture. He constantly attended all kinds of trade fairs and shows in order to – as we would say today – track down new trends. How can we best extend our range? What suits our line of business? These were the questions driving him forwards."

**Current business was the responsibility of "Uncle Willi"**  
"At the company it was Uncle Willi who kept things going. That's what everyone called him. "Uncle Willi" was Willi Lövenich, Wilhelm Köpp's brother-in-law and the 'soul' of the company. Without him Wilhelm would undoubtedly not have been able to concentrate on his business, growing the company", concludes Gert Schneiders.

## Filtering technology and sealants – do they really go together?

At first glance permeable materials for filtration are not just the exact opposite of sealing products, which are supposed to be anything but permeable. KÖPP founded the Filtering Technology department in 1965 from a conviction that a business able to weather crises should have more than one leg to stand on.

## KÖPP FILTERTECHNIK A new product line is born



Werner Köpp, ISH '79

The department was then developed further by Wilhelm Köpp's son Werner, who joined the firm in 1957. Like his father, he mainly dealt with new products and additional fields of business. He was already familiar with the segment thanks to work experience previously undertaken at various companies in the rubber industry. At the age of 21 he spent a year in England working at a number of very different firms, including one manufacturing sintered porous polyethylene: the company that nowadays produces VYON®. He subsequently put these contacts to good use and was then able to buy in this filter material direct from the company. This resulted in the development of an entire product line.

## Seeking partners with identical properties

For Werner Köpp the coupling of cellular rubber and filter materials was never so ill-matched as it might seem at first glance. His argument did not revolve so much around the intended purpose of the material, but its properties: "Cellular rubber is porous, and filter material porous. They do go together after all." And Werner Köpp is of course right there. After all, both are still together – and have even expanded. But more about that on the following pages.

**1938** 1 September 1938: Wilhelm Köpp founds a business for trading cellular and sponge rubber in Aachen WILHELM KÖPP ZELLKAUTSCHUK Workforce: approx. 10

**1940** Outbreak of Second World War

**1944** Wartime – Evacuation to Kemberg near Wittenberg

**1946** Return to Jakobstraße in Aachen

**1948** Kurt Jung starts an apprenticeship

**1950** Stand at Leipzig Trade Fair

**1950** 1 April 1948: WILHELM KÖPP ZELLKAUTSCHUK KG

**1950** Relocation to Lütticher Straße Workforce: approx. 20

**1955** Cologne Trade Fair '56

**1955** Son Werner joins the company

**1955** First staff outing to the river Rhine

**1958** Relocation to Lütticher Straße Workforce: approx. 20

**1958** Start of Germany's Economic Miracle

**1958** Konrad Adenauer becomes the first chancellor (Bundeskanzler) of the Federal Republic of Germany

**1958** Germany wins the World Cup in Bern

**1958** Shortage of labour – the first 'gastarbeiter' move to Germany

**1959** World economy in recession

**1961** Building of Berlin wall

**1963** Founding of Filtering Technology department Mitarbeiter: ca. 120

**1963** Wilhelm Köpp publishes "Geschichte der porösen und zelligen Erzeugnisse aus Kautschuk und Kunststoff", a history of porous and cellular products made of rubber and plastics

**1963** Relocation to Haaren

**1963** Aerial photograph and production plant at Hergelsbendenstraße in Aachen-Haaren

**1964** Kurt Jung receives joint power of representation

**1964** Ludwig Erhard becomes Bundeskanzler

**1964** Visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Federal Republic of Germany

**1964** Kurt Kiesinger governs the first Grand Coalition

**1964** Hippie movement Protests of 1968

**1964** Willy Brandt becomes Bundeskanzler

**1970** The firm Gummi + Kunststoff KG in Berlin is taken over as a 100% subsidiary under the name of Schaum und Elastomer GmbH & Co.

**1970** Founding of German Red Army Faction (RAF) terrorist gang

**1971** 25 years of service by Kurt Jung

**1971** Werner Köpp receives joint power of representation

**1971** New offices in Aachen

**1972** Oil crisis

**1972** Germany wins the World Cup

**1973** Helmut Schmidt becomes Bundeskanzler

**1976** Terrorist attacks by RAF

**1980** Founding of Die Grünen, Germany's Green Party

**1981** Helmut Kohl becomes Bundeskanzler

**1982**

### From round cord to formed in place foam gasket

When Werner Köpp took over management of WILHELM KÖPP ZELKAUTSCHUK GmbH & Co. KG in 1983, he had already shared

joint power of representation with Kurt Jung for seven years. In the meantime the company had increased its workforce to 140, and not only boasted sites in Aachen, Berlin and Bovenden but in 1992 also acquired a stake in a firm based in France. To cater for growing demand, a new production and warehouse facility was inaugurated in Aachen in 2000 to significantly increase capacity of warehousing and splitting.

2001 was the year in which a relatively unknown sealing technology came into its own: FIP(F)G. Werner Köpp had realised its potential. He invested steadily in this sector and started manufacturing FIP(F)G at the Bovenden branch. However, in 2007 he was compelled to say goodbye to his Berlin-based factory after 35 years of production at the site. Efficient manufacture was made difficult by the introduction of tighter environmental standards in a city that was booming after the Berlin wall had come down. This coincided with the disappearance of assistance for the former Special Economic Zone of West Berlin and ultimately spelt closure for the plant. The company however quickly found a new production site in Romania; for more about this see the following page.

In 2008 Werner Köpp handed over the reins to his son Oliver and Achim Raab, the son of Ernst Raab, the other partner in the firm, expressing the wish that they would take as much enjoyment in the challenges of the business as he had always done.

### Polyethylene: the 'synthetic relative' of cellular rubber



In an era when Germany discovered synthetics as a universal substitute for all natural materials, Werner Köpp made use of his contacts at the English company BXL Ltd. to get on board the 'synthetic relative' of cellular rubber – cell polyethylene. Consumers were particularly impressed by the unique properties of this material, whose production process is equally

exceptional. This combines the use of pure PEs with nitrogen as a blowing agent. The cell polyethylene manufactured by BXL Ltd. (today Zotefoams) and distributed for the first time in Germany by KÖPP offers very low fogging values and a very good allergenic rating while also being particularly lightweight – the very thing for modern vehicle interiors. Here the trend was away from wood, leather and hard plastic in favour of softer, lighter and ultimately safer materials. But other sectors of industry such as orthopaedics and medical engineering have also enjoyed the benefits of this material.

Werner Köpp described the introduction of Plastazote® polyethylene foam as a milestone of the time. For some years KÖPP's sales in this business sector have been higher than for cellular rubber.

### Change as an opportunity: With FIP(F)G KÖPP is investing in the future and diversity

"If you asked what I am most proud of, I'd immediately say the introduction of FIP(F)G technology in 2001." These were Werner Köpp's words when he was interviewed for issue No. 2 of Insight in 2011 – one year before he passed away.

The benefits offered by this technology were soon identified. FIP(F)G sealing systems are able to replace the classical sponge rubber profile as a seal in many applications. Insertion of the finished profiles can sometimes be a very complex process that is rather prone to error due to the high level of manual effort involved. This means that the conventional process is clearly inferior to FIP(F)G technology with its automatic seal application via dosing robots. Werner Köpp nevertheless had to work very hard at convincing others as high levels of investment were necessary here. In those days such an automatic dosing system already cost between 200,000 and 300,000 German marks.

KÖPP now has ten machines, another production site in Aachen and can claim to be Europe's largest service provider for this technology.



KÖPP is today convinced that had it failed to invest in FIP(F)G, it would in all likelihood have lost a lot of business and deprived its customers of a full selection of options. Today KÖPP can offer solutions in all areas of sealing technology. Customers can select the product best suited to their needs. And KÖPP does not have to defend any solution that is not perfectly suited to the application in question.



Werner Köpp joins the management of the company



K Trade Fair, Düsseldorf. Participation in the "Rubber Street", a joint stand organised for the first time by BAYER for medium-sized rubber processors

Hannover Messe '87 trade fair



Grandson Oliver joins the company  
Workforce: approx. 140

Renaming of the company WILHELM KÖPP ZELKAUTSCHUK GMBH & CO. KG

† 30 June 1995: Company founder Wilhelm Köpp dies at the age of 90



KÖPP Filtering Technology ISH '93 Frankfurt



K Trade Fair Düsseldorf



† 1 May 1997: Death of managing director Kurt Jung



Werner Köpp becomes sole managing director

completion of new production facility, at Aachen HQ



New dosing system in Bovenden for sponge rubber compounds



Warehousing and production facility in Aachen set on fire by children



Warehousing and production facilities, Aachen



Start of FIP(F)G manufacture at Bovenden branch

Closure of Schaum und Elastomer GmbH & Co., Berlin

1983

The first mobile phone

Richard von Weizsäcker becomes Federal President of Germany (Bundespräsident)

Boris Becker is the first German to win the Grand Slam tournament in Wimbledon

1987

Glasnost and Perestroika

Steffi Graf wins all four Grand Slam tournaments

1989

Fall of Berlin wall

1990

Helmut Kohl becomes 'Chancellor of German Reunification'

1992

Maastricht Treaty furthers European Union

1993

Single European market

1995

Germany wins European Football Championship for the third time

1997

Gerhardt Schröder becomes Bundeskanzler

1998

Relocation of German government from Bonn to Berlin

1999

Terror attacks in USA by Al-Qaeda

2001

Euro becomes legal tender

Legislation for reform of the labour market (Hartz I-IV)

2005

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger elected Pope Benedict XVI

Angela Merkel becomes Bundeskanzler

2007

### KÖPP taps into the markets of the future

When Werner Köpp handed over management of the company to son Oliver and Achim Raab in 2008, this was the first time that a name other than Köpp had headed up the firm. But the Raab family had become part of the business years before. As early as 1959 Ernst Raab, Achim Raab's father had played an important role in shaping company fortunes in his role as accountant, auditor and partner in the firm. The future managing directors Oliver Köpp and Achim Raab first met in 1981 when they both had holiday jobs, working side by side in KÖPP's production plant. Fast forward 27 years to 2008, and they are once again working together – this time at the head of the company.

#### New markets – new Strategies

The two newly appointed managing directors were immediately confronted with the financial crisis that broke in 2009. Thanks to the company's broad-based portfolio and extensive investment KÖPP was well equipped to deal with the effects of the crisis. Sales however saw a sharp drop in 2009. The cost reductions and restructuring already implemented at the beginning of 2008 then started to pay off. The writing on the wall is growth and globalisation. In 2011 KÖPP then set up a joint venture, hoping for a share of the promising Indian market. Following extensive preparations KÖPP managed to sign up a joint venture agreement with Roop Polymers Ltd. a leading manufacturer of moulded rubber parts in this booming economy. Trading under the name of Roop Koepp Foam Technologies Private Limited, they planned to establish the business as a distributor and processor of expanded rubber and plastic products in India and so build up this market. The globalisation strategy moved forward in 2012 with founding of the subsidiary KOEPP ROMANIA S.R.L.

Further investment was also channelled into the sites in Germany: an additional manufacturing and warehouse facility in Bovenden, the start of FIP(F)G production at the Aachen site and extension and modernisation of the laboratory.

And the two managing directors still have big plans. The aim of all activities is of course to grow their company. To achieve this goal Achim Raab and Oliver Köpp have adhered to the principles of their predecessors: Developing what has proved successful and venturing into new territory while always keeping an eye on customers demands.

**"If you don't go with the times, you'll have to go over time."**

A ominous saying that is unfortunately all too true. But a lack of sensitivity to the spirit of the times is not something that any of the managing directors in the company's history could be accused of. Just as Wilhelm Köpp had realised that the hour had come for the plastic foam (in the form of cell polyethylene), Werner Köpp was no slower in recognising the potential offered by FIP(F)G technology. The current trend is more than ever towards globalisation. Two key steps have already been taken here with founding of the subsidiary KOEPP S.R.L. ROMANIA and set-up of the joint venture Roop Koepp Foam Technologies Private Limited. And no end is in sight.



When the Berlin-based factory for cellular rubber shut down in 2007, the company was already feverishly searching for a new site. KÖPP joined in the trend towards relocating production to Eastern Europe – and with good reason – and in 2008 acquired a stake in the Romanian firm Rubbertec S.R.L. This was followed by a programme of activities: extensive investment in overhauling and modernising the manufacturing equipment from Berlin, the start of production of KÖPP's tried and tested qualities and careful streamlining of its product range. In 2011 the company was then taken over by KÖPP and so became a 100% subsidiary. The commitment and indefatigable efforts of the general manager Valentin Dublea have made it possible to re-introduce KÖPP's successful chloroprene and natural rubber qualities – combining its customary high standard with affordable prices.

The joint venture with an Indian partner was also initiated in 2011: besides its existing homogeneous rubber products the company was hoping to establish cellular materials in India as well. Not least due to the ever-increasing presence of European and Japanese automotive manufacturers and their suppliers and the booming industrial landscape of this country. In Roop Polymers Ltd. KÖPP has found a partner with a high level of market acceptance in the field of homogeneous rubber products. KÖPP therefore does not just plan to capture the local Indian market, but to also expand further into the growth markets of Southeast Asia.

### "Experts in Foam"

KÖPP has now been selling seals for 75 years – but of course not always of the same type. The demands made of the perfect seal are increasingly complex and ever-more specific. KÖPP constantly invests in expertise and the latest technology for its development work in order to not just cater for these requirements but to surpass them. This is why the laboratory underwent extensive modernisation in 2013.

This upgrading programme significantly shortens development cycles and so results in innovative qualities that are guaranteed to cater for market requirements. One example is the newly developed sponge rubber compounds that are 100% sulphur-free.

The investment in extension of the lab ensures that sponge and cellular rubber products from KÖPP will always keep pace with the times however the requirements of the market may change. And after 75 years this is not lastly what has made KÖPP into the company it is today: "experts in foam".



Acquisition of a stake in Rubbertec S.R.L., Romania



Workforce at all sites: approx. 250



First issue of customer and staff magazine insight at K Trade Fair in Düsseldorf



Conclusion of Joint Venture agreement: Founding of Roop Koepp Foam Technologies Private Limited



Founding of the subsidiary KOEPP ROMANIA S.R.L.

† 6 September 2012: Entrepreneur Werner Köpp dies at the age of 75



Modern FIP(F)G manufacture at Bovenden site



Completion of renovation work at Aachen HQ

Inauguration of FIP(F)G production plant at Aachen



Change in management of the family firm: Oliver Köpp und Achim Raab take over the reins on 1 January 2013

2008

Barack Obama becomes America's first African-American President

2009

Unexpected death of Michael Jackson, the King of Pop

2010

Severe flooding in the east of Germany

Sebastian Vettel becomes the youngest ever Formula 1 World Champion

2011

Massenpanik auf der Loveparade

Lena Meyer-Landrut wins the 55th Eurovision Song Contest with the song "Satellite"

Plagiarism scandal involving Defence Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg

Osama bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda, is hunted down and killed

2012

EHEC bacteria spread fear

Bundespräsident Christian Wulf announces his resignation

Joachim Gauck becomes 11th Bundespräsident

2013

to be continued...

