

Private patrons

Bonds with ETH

Many former ETH students arrive at a point in their lives when they decide to give something back to the university. Although this comes in many forms, the common thread is the bond that alumni have with ETH Zurich.

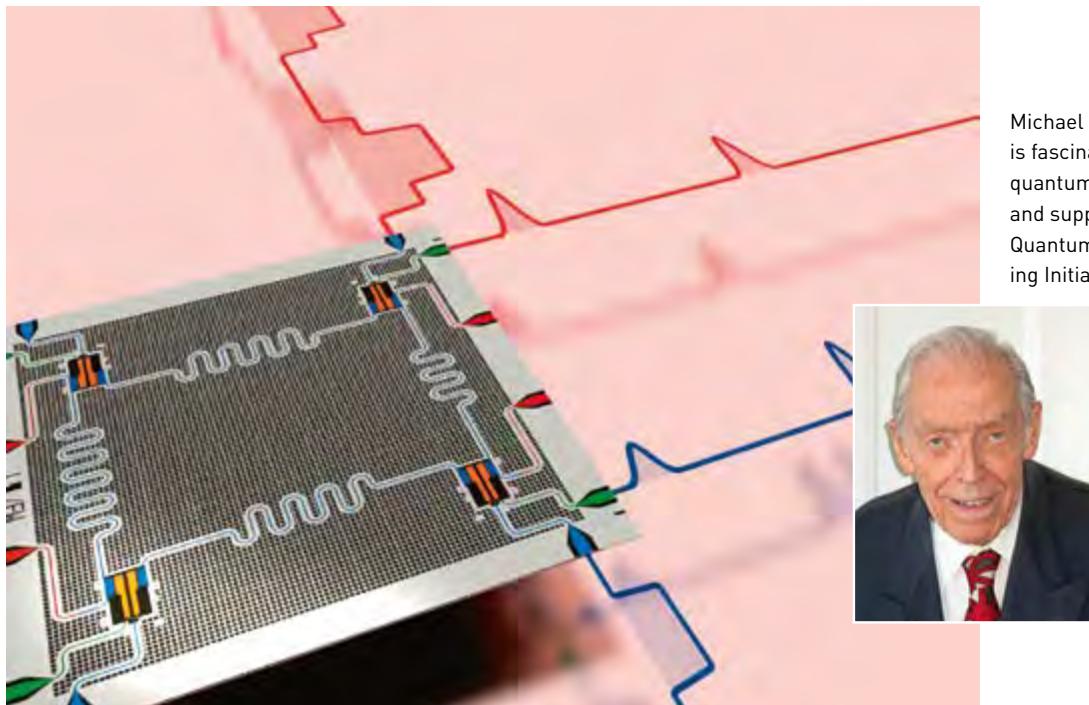
32 ETH alumnus Michael Kohn keenly recounts how even in retirement it's never too late to engage in something new – in his case quantum engineering. Not too long ago, former ETH President Ralph Eichler told him about a new ETH initiative aimed at translating the findings of quantum science into technical applications. As an energy specialist and impassioned engineer, Kohn was immediately keen: "I was excited by the idea of getting to grips with something new again, and I could see the importance of shaping how we process informa-

tion in the future." This was why Kohn directed his Foundation to make a substantial contribution in support of ETH Zurich's Quantum Engineering Initiative.

Building on ETH knowledge

Kohn can look back at a long and varied career. It's now over 60 years since he studied civil engineering at ETH Zurich and completed his subsequent thesis on dam construction. In 1953, he took up his first post at Motor-Columbus AG/Aare Tessin AG, where he spent over 20 years in senior engi-

neering positions and as a member of the supervisory board. Towards the end of the 1950s Kohn began a six-year stay in Israel, where he helped plan systems that would divert water from the Sea of Galilee in the north of the then new state to the arid regions in the south. "I was also able to channel much of what I learned at ETH Zurich into the project," says Kohn. He would later make a name for himself as Switzerland's "energy pope" – a title conferred largely due to his work as chair of the Swiss Federal Commission on Energy Policy (GEK), which was



Michael Kohn is fascinated by quantum research and supports the Quantum Engineering Initiative.

founded in 1974 in response to the prevailing oil crisis. This role gave him a major hand in shaping Swiss energy policy. Although his support for building new nuclear power stations means Kohn has been under constant fire from environmentalists and the left ever since, he never shied away from dialogue with his political opponents. Indeed, his debate with Ursula Koch of Switzerland's Social Democratic Party, which was held at ETH Zurich, was the basis for the book "Titanic oder Arche Noah. Gespräche zu Energie, Technik und Gesellschaft" (Titanic or Noah's Ark. Discussions on Energy, Technology and Society). Kohn is still active as an energy consultant and his clients include the Swiss government. Asked about his hopes for ETH in the future, he said: "The focus should be on quality rather than quantity." — Samuel Schlaefli

Thanks for a great experience

Kohn is by no means alone in his commitment to his alma mater. Chemist Dorothée Wegmann, who passed away in January, studied and wrote her thesis at ETH in the 1950s and maintained a lifelong connection with the university. After several years at the Universidad de La Laguna in Tenerife, she returned to ETH and worked for many years in the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences. Until very late in life, she corrected and edited theses and scientific papers written by younger colleagues and was always keen to help doctoral students in any way she could. In her lifetime, Wegmann supported the Excellence Scholarship and Opportunity Programme. She died in January this year at the age of 80, and her will named the ETH Zurich Foundation as her sole beneficiary.

Xiaojing Zhang also has a strong bond with ETH, albeit one with a much shorter history. Zhang is currently

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

With effect from 1 November, Lukas Burkhardt (36) has been named the new Chief Operating Officer at Franke Group and so now sits on the management board. Burkhardt holds a PhD in mechanical engineering from ETH Zurich and has worked in various management positions around the world, especially in Asia.



ENERGY

In August 2015, Michael Paulus (43) was made the new head of technology and career training at the Verband Schweizerischer Elektrizitätsunternehmen (VSE, association of Swiss electrical companies) and member of the management board. Most recently he worked as a business development manager at Swissgrid AG, and prior to that had been at BKW Energie AG for nearly eleven years. Paulus wrote his dissertation while studying for his physics degree at ETH Zurich.

SBB INFRASTRUCTURE

Michel Kunz (56) will assume management of the Installations and Technology business unit at SBB Infrastructure in early 2016. Previously, Kunz served as CEO of the Swiss Post and of Orell Füssli Holding. He studied electrical engineering at ETH Zurich from 1980 to 1984.