

HOW I FOUND MY APPRENTICESHIP

by Sebastian Stenzel

When I had finished school, I had the loose idea to study physics, which had been my main subject in the last two years. However, I started studying Traditional Chinese Medicine in Santa Cruz, California, instead. But I had also been interested in instrument making since the age of 12, and in fact had made a simple guitar at the age of 13. So when I returned to Munich after the first semester of studies, I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a guitar maker working at his bench behind a store front window of an antiquarian music store just around the corner from where I lived at that time. Following an inner command, I went inside and just asked him right away if he would teach me. He smiled friendly, and said no.

I left the shop with the conviction that eventually he would. Soon after this first encounter, the guitar maker, Gert Esmiol, became self-employed, and I used any excuse to drop by, but my occasional inquiries about being apprenticed were always rejected.

At that time, I was making a living driving taxi (whenever the rent was due or the fridge empty) and occasional carpentry jobs. I had more or less given up on the apprenticeship, but just in case, I had left my father's phone number with the guitar maker, so he could reach me, wherever I was.

I was considering teaching myself to make guitars, when a friend asked me if I would join him starting a business making Japanese-style furniture. The idea appealed to me much more than driving taxi, however I asked him to give me a few days to consider, as I had somewhat bitten my teeth into the idea of becoming a guitar maker.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon when I found the time to make the decision between Japanese-style furniture and self-taught guitarmaking. I was sitting on the floor making a table of pros and cons for either option, when the phone rang. It was Gert Esmiol, telling me I could begin my apprenticeship.