

TK's Biography

TK was born into a working-class family in Frankfurt, Germany, where both parents struggled to raise Thomas and two younger siblings.

As a child, he quickly absorbed lessons about stock trading from his father, Willi Kramer, who himself became one of the most important figures on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange. Willi Kramer was a maverick who, in 1960, was the youngest market maker on the Frankfurt Stock Exchange. The senior Kramer became an institution in Frankfurt and later founded his own market maker company.

TK showed early signs that he would become a successful entrepreneur. At age 13, TK published his own monthly newspaper, Pausenzeichen (Recess), featuring political and school-related articles.

During a school project where he was assigned to study the stock market, TK made an important realization:

Stocks go up... stocks go down... money can be made from the movements.

Excited by the possibilities, the young TK quickly developed his next plan of action: stock trading.

At age 14, he opened a bank account with 500 German Marks earned by selling his newspaper.

By age 17, TK had made his first million German marks using the school pay phone as his only trading tool.

TK also developed a strong interest in politics and became leader of the regional JU, the official youth organization of the conservative party in his home state. His driving interest in politics soon took him to a national level.

In San Francisco, during the Republican National Convention, TK was invited by the Republican Party to participate in a live televised debate.

His outspoken views against Communism and strong support of American military engagement in Vietnam, earned him a seat next to then Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, during the Republican National Convention.

Several years later, TK was invited to President Ronald Reagan's Inaugural Ball.

In May 1976, at 18, he arrived in Boston, Massachusetts, signed up for courses at Harvard University and started as a trainee at ABD (Dresdner Bank's sister company).

Several months later TK moved to New York City where he was kicked out of ABD for generating too much trading volume, as a trainee, for his own account.

A position at the brokerage firm Messel & Co. on the London Stock Exchange was followed by a return to Germany to study economics at Frankfurt University.

This was followed by a stint in the German Army.

In New York City, in 1979, TK was taken under the wing of Stanley Florin, one of the all-time legends of the New York Stock Exchange.

Bad advice from this mentor resulted in TK losing his entire fortune..., which, he made back within weeks.

A lesson he would never forget: only listen to your own instincts.

In 1987, while trading for Shearson American Express - living between New York and Munich - TK predicted the stock market crash in a German newspaper months before it happened.

He became an instant celebrity, appearing on numerous talk shows. He was featured in dozens of newspaper and magazine articles where he was touted as a "Wunderkind".

In 1989, TK met Catherine-Anne Burda, daughter of Germany's most powerful publishing family.

They married in 1989. They had a daughter, Joya, in 1992. They divorced in 1995.

In 1991, a New Year's Eve trip to Miami proved pivotal in TK's life. It was here he saw his vision for a new South Beach.

From his bird's eye view office on the 102nd floor of the World Trade Center, TK had witnessed the transformation of Battery Park Plaza from a festering landfill into a shining mini-metropolis. TK knew what he would do in South Beach.

He quickly snapped up 120 properties on South Beach and joined forces with Jorge Perez, CEO and president of The Related Group of Florida, a developer known as the Bill Gates of condominiums.

Over a decade later TK's vision changed Miami's reality.

What was once a wasteland of crumbling, vacant buildings is now one of Florida's hippest, most luxurious and expensive neighborhoods: South of Fifth.

TK successfully transformed the South Beach slum into a world-famous, world-class destination.