

Toronto: The “Decoration of Merit in Gold” for John Robert Raschke

John Raschke was born in 1931 in Vienna. His family owned a business in the inner city. Following graduation from high school in 1951, he attended the University of Economic Science (*Hochschule für Welthandel*) until 1954. During his studies he earned money as a part-time surveyor, lumber grader and wholesaler.

In 1954 he emigrated with his wife to Canada under the then existing “Assisted Passage Program” of the Canadian Government. They found employment and worked as domestics until they had paid off the loan for their passage. Having passed through the first phase of common immigrant experiences, he found employment with the Toronto Dominion Bank. Like many others he struggled with the mortgage payments, taking part-time jobs to make ends meet. As a banker he worked actively with a great number of immigrants and immigrant organizations to facilitate their assimilation into the Canadian economy, assisting them with the financing of new businesses. He also found the time and energy to continue his university education, graduating in 1968, and becoming a Fellow of the Institute of Canadian Bankers.

In the same year he was transferred to Vienna. His Austrian education and work history together with his Canadian experience, as well his Austrian citizenship which he had retained, gave him the opportunity to become the manager of a Canadian-owned Bank, Bankhaus Mayer-Loos & Co. His mission was to computerize the extremely conservative operating and reporting system of the bank and bring it up to North American standards.

He remained in Vienna until 1971 when he returned to Canada and continued in his banking career, serving in numerous senior positions; he often acted as liaison to immigrants and subsidiaries of overseas companies in establishing and maintaining their banking business in Canada. His involvement in international banking often required him to meet with Austrian business people and to work with the Austrian Trade Delegation to Canada. The helping hand that he so often extended to immigrants earned him the title “the banker of the DP’s.”

Following his retirement in 1988 he kept active in the world of banking, consulting as a collection specialist with the Province of Ontario for their large network of credit unions. In 1992 he took a position as commercial loan manager at the Banca Commerciale Italiana of Canada.

Throughout his professional career as a banker he continually maintained contact with a great number of immigrants and immigrant groups. In 1968 he was involved in the incorporation of the Canadian-Austrian Society of Toronto, since his return to Canada in 1971 working in a managing capacity (from 1981 on as president and treasurer). The Canadian-Austrian Society of Toronto furthers the cultural exchange between Austria and Canada and has, since its inception, brought numer-



ous Austrian cultural events to Canada. These have consisted of musical events (chamber orchestras, individual performers like classical pianists, etc.), plays and readings (theatre productions, readings by classical performers, etc.), arts (exhibitions, etc.), movies and videos and general interest events.

In 1995 he became a charter member, officer and director of the Austrian-Canadian Council, the Austrian-Canadian Council Foundation, and a number of associated organisations.

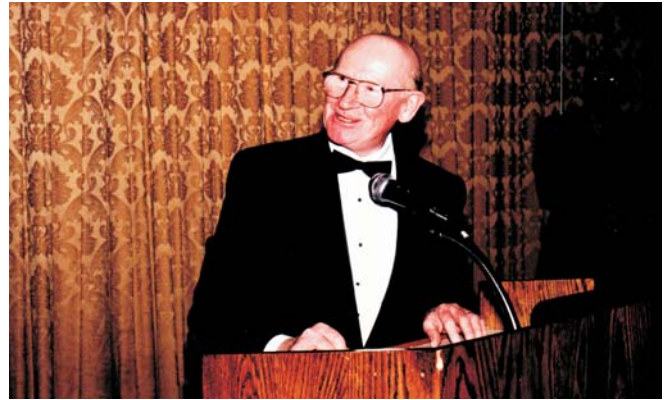
For his many and outstanding services to the Austrian-Canadian cause, he was awarded the “Decoration of Merit in Gold” of the Republic of Austria by the Austrian Ambassador.

Dr. Kurt Fürst

A Gala Night in Vienna Honoring the Austrian Ambassador



"A Gala Night in Vienna": Honoring the Austrian Ambassador H. E. Dr. Walther Lichem, at the National Arts Centre, Ottawa, November 23, 1998. Left to right (selection): Mrs. Marie-Louise Higham, Pierre Beaudin (Bombardier Aerospace), Dr. W. Lichem, and speaker Robin Higham. Photo credits: Rollframe, R. Pirker.



Mr. Gerhard (Gary) Bonner (President, Austrian-Canadian Council)



Left to right: Mag. Maria-Teresa Lichem, Dr. W. Lichem, N.N., and Mrs. Maria Virjee (President, SOS Children's Villages Canada). Photo credits: Rollframe, B. Pirker.



Left to right: Mag. Maria-Teresa Lichem, Dr. W. Lichem, Donna Brown (singer), Jean-Jacques Van Vlasselaer (Carleton University), Mrs. Marie-Louise and Mr. Robin Higham. Photo credits: Rollframe, R. Pirker.



University of Ottawa, Freiman Hall, June 24-27, 1999. Workshop session. Left to right: Jean Deschênes (teacher), Rebecca Szauter (18), Rachel Seilern (15), Annie Scully (16), Mathias Seilern (18), and Ed Wyslouzil (teacher). Photocredits: Rollframe, R. Pirker.



Workshop session. Left to right: Ed Wyslouzil (teacher), Mathias Seilern (18), Annie Scully (16), Rebecca Szauter (18), Jean Deschênes (teacher). Photocredits: Rollframe, R. Pirker.