

## Tribute to Founding Member John Bock

Sadly, we've reached the end of an era. VDD Group Canada recently lost its last founding member, John Bock. One way or another, John was involved with the DD in Canada for the past 46 years and it would be fair to say that without his initiative and dedication we would not be where we are today as a Chapter of VDD e. V.

John came to Canada from Germany as a young man and settled in Ontario. In 1972 he imported his first Deutsch-Drahthaar, Cora v. d. Preussenburg, became active in the Ontario Chapter of NAVDHA and got to know other DD/GWP owners. He and the others—many of them German immigrants—soon decided the emphasis on big running dogs in the NAVDHA testing system did not suit their hunting tradition, so they set their minds to developing an alternative. They held a daylong meeting on May 26, 1974, during which they established *Club Drahthaar of Canada*, based on VDD and JGHV rules and regulations. John was elected President of the CDC and the next year also took on the role of Breed Warden.



It is clear from the newsletters of those early days that John was the driving force behind the establishment and development of Club Drahthaar of Canada. The club held training days, judge clinics, and tests, and developed a breed registry based on the VDD model. Membership grew, and more DDs were imported from the motherland. John made an arrangement with his employer, the Carl Zeiss Company, to print the 16-page Drahthaar News at no charge in exchange for an advertisement for binoculars and rifle scopes, and John provided much of the content for the newsletter.

As early as 1976 John was talking with VDD in Germany about the possibility of the Canadian DD club becoming a member, but at that time the German organization had no interest in having a Chapter outside of Germany. John persisted nonetheless. In 1980 he met and became friends with Herr Paul Kuehne, and over the years John imported several dogs from Kuehne's kennel, vom Grenzschutz. Kuehne later became Chairman of VDD e. V. In 1981 John wrote an article about Club Drahthaar of Canada for the DD-Blätter, the official VDD publication. John reported that the article "must have been well liked since I received dozens of inquiries, not only from Germany but also from other countries." Finally in 1983 John again approached VDD regarding membership and this time received a more positive response. With Paul Kuehne's help and influenced by the positive impression made in the DD-Blätter article, Club Drahthaar of Canada was accepted for membership by the Germans in 1984 and morphed into VDD Group Canada. John was elected Chairman of the club, a position he held until 1992.

On the home front John continued to promote the breed and the club. In addition to the further development of the testing and breeding systems in the late 70's and early 80's, he encouraged the expansion of the club into Nova Scotia when interest in the breed developed there. The number of members increased, and an impressive number of dogs were tested and evaluated. John worked with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to demonstrate the usefulness of DD's for blood tracking on deer, an effort which contributed to Ontario allowing the use of properly managed blood tracking dogs during big game hunting. John's devotion to the full and proper use of the breed occupied much of his time. In his "spare time", John served as both a performance judge and a breed judge at Canadian and US tests and breed shows.

John was an avid hunter and dog man, but in the 1990's had a back injury that curtailed these activities – much to his sorrow. However, it never slowed down his interest and participation in the club. John continued to support the Group Canada Executive in whatever way he could. He frequently served as the Chairman of the Election Committee in later years. And in 2012 John proposed and helped to develop a Breeders Award that would recognize the contributions of our breeders. He donated the magnificent trophy that travels from one winner to the next. Whenever possible, John attended the Ontario tests and renewed his friendship with our members. He was a true gentleman and it was always a pleasure to see him. John's son Otto reports that John was active outdoors up to the last afternoon of his life.

Those of us who knew John have many good memories from over the years, and we will miss his friendship as well as his enthusiasm and devotion to the breed and the club. Many of you never had the opportunity to meet John, but hopefully you will appreciate how much you owe him as you hunt your DDs across Canada. Please raise your glass in honour of this man who loved and devoted so much of his life to the Deutsch-Drahthaar. Waidmannsheil!