

Hans Eichner
1921-2009



Hans Eichner was born on October 30, 1921 and grew up in Vienna in the predominantly Jewish Leopoldstadt district. After Hitler annexed Austria in 1938, he fled to England, and was then sent to an internment camp in Australia. He often said that there, at the “camp university”, set up by the detainees, he received the education that had been denied him as a Jew in Austria. On his return to England, he enrolled in the University of London while working during the daytime. He received his B.A. in Mathematics, German and Latin in 1944, his B.A. Honours in German Language and Literature in 1946, and his Ph.D. in German Literature in 1949.

He taught at Bedford College, University of London from 1948 to 1950, and then took up a position at Queen’s University (Kingston, ON). In 1967, he moved to the University of Toronto. He chaired the German Department from 1975 to 1984. The numerous honours Hans Eichner received in the course of a long and distinguished career include: election to the Royal Society of Canada (1967), the Gold Medal of the Goethe Institute Munich (1973), LL.D. from Queen’s University (1974), University Professor at the University of Toronto (1981), the William Riley Parker Prize of the Modern Language Association of America (1982), the Hermann Boeschenstein Medal of the Canadian Association of University Teachers of German (1988), LL.D. from the University of Toronto (2003).

Hans Eichner was a brilliant scholar. He published and edited numerous books and articles on German literature, ranging over two centuries, from Goethe to Thomas Mann. He had an international reputation as a scholar of German Romanticism. In particular, his work on Friedrich Schlegel, which included several books, many articles and the co-editorship of the historical-critical edition, made him a leading authority on that author.

Hans Eichner was an inspired teacher who instilled a love of literature in many students, and he had a remarkable success rate as doctoral supervisor.

Hans Eichner was a literary author as well as a scholar. During his days in London, he published poetry, and, much later, wrote a novel, *Kahn & Engelmann*, which is a monument to Austrian Jews. It appeared in hardcover in Austria (2000), as a paperback in Germany (2002), and an English translation is about to be published by biblioasis.

There was yet another side to Hans Eichner. He loved rock-climbing, badminton and sailing. And he was extremely fond of his island in the Rideau Lakes district of Ontario, where he spent many summers and where he did much of his writing.

After a long illness, Hans Eichner passed away peacefully on April 8, 2009 at the age of 87 with his beloved wife, Kari Grimstad, at his bedside. He was predeceased by his older brother Fritz Oakes. He is deeply mourned by family members - Jane and Paul Best, Anna and Jon; Jim Eichner, Carol Alexander and Madeline; Iris Oakes; Joan Eichner; and David Field, Katrina Miller and Freya. He will be missed by his many friends and colleagues in German Studies in North America, England, Germany and Austria.