



CLASSIFIED GREEN SHEET



Knoth fuels ASC's German effort

ASC Inc.'s decision a few years ago to build a plant in West Germany had a great deal of special meaning for someone other than just German-born company founder and Chairman Heinz Prechter.

Because, like Prechter, Karl Knoth, the man who would ultimately direct ASC's Heilbronn assembly operation through its start-up phase, was born and reared in Germany.

And like Prechter, Knoth, now a Northville resident, emigrated to the United States while in his 20s to pursue the American dream.

ASC Inc., formerly the American Sunroof Corporation of Southgate, is one of the largest specialty manufacturer in the automotive industry. ASC performs convertible conversions and other aftermarket alterations on production cars.

So, for Knoth, a 20-year ASC employee who observed his 60th birthday recently, the Germany project represented a truly unique opportunity.

The Heilbronn plant, which was built after ASC garnered a milestone corporate agreement to perform convertible conversions for German-based Porsche, offered Knoth a chance to utilize his broad-based, U.S.-gained business acumen in his native land.

As both he and Prechter would soon find, however, the task proved more challenging than either

expected.

"When ASC opened its West German plant two years ago, I was delighted at the prospect of doing business in the country where I was born," Prechter commented during a recent speaking engagement. "I always said to myself, 'If there's one thing I'll master, it'll be doing business in Germany.' I speak the language, I understand the customs, and was raised in the country."

"Well, I was mistaken about what I thought would be a breeze. A great deal has changed since I left Germany in 1963. Today, it's a very structured, socialized environment. And frankly, I underestimated the effects that this structured and disciplined philosophy would have on our building specialty cars overseas."

One of the principal difficulties grew out of the fact that German manufacturing has become extremely automated through the years.

"Our business of producing specialty cars on the other hand is very labor-intensive — not highly mechanized or automated," Prechter said. "Well, we found that the labor-intensive nature of our business was at odds with the many German work force regulations."

But, according to Knoth, who serves as ASC's president of manufacturing and assembly, the plant has made significant progress since its opening.

"Heilbronn was a headache of ours during the first year and a half, no question about it," he said. "But, according to the customer (Porsche), we're building much-improved products. Our defects per unit are down. We are where we should be. We're getting some stability in the plant now."

According to Prechter, Knoth has been instrumental in getting the plant — as well as ASC's broader European role — off to a successful start.

"Karl played a pivotal role in establishing our presence in Europe and in our dealings with our Porsche counterparts," Prechter said. "Clearly, his German background and heritage and his knowledge of the customs, culture and language proved invaluable in our endeavors to be accepted and succeed."

Knoth joined ASC in 1971 as plant manager of the company's Southgate Assembly Operation, the only ASC production facility at the time.

Throughout his association with ASC, he has held a number of key executive posts, including general plants manager, vice president of manufacturing and supply operations, executive vice president and chief operating officer.

Before joining ASC, Knoth was employed by Ford Motor Co. for 14 years. He joined Ford's Automotive Assembly Division in 1957. During his tenure with the company, he was ap-

pointed to a number of managerial positions in both manufacturing and production control.

He also was part of the company's sales forecasting group and served as a member of Ford's Launch and Balance-Out committees. He held the post of section supervisor of scheduling and production prior to joining ASC.

Over the course of Knoth's career with the Southgate-based automotive specialty company, he and Prechter have developed a close rapport.

"Karl has always been, and continues to be, the ASC standard of dedication and commitment by which we measure ourselves," Prechter said. "In as much as I respect his contributions of leadership, loyalty, effort and compassion, what I truly treasure is his friendship and good counsel."

Others who have worked with him through the years say Knoth's often hard-driving, tough-talking approach to his work shroud "a real heart of gold."

Knoth obtained the majority of his schooling in Germany, where he earned a degree as an international trade correspondent. He subsequently studied at Harvard University's Graduate School of Business.

Knoth, who speaks Spanish and French as well as English and his native German, held several key positions with the U.S. Air Force and Army Intelligence from 1951 to 1957.



KARL KNOTH

Good records can help limit spending

Does your spending outpace your earnings? Do you often find yourself running to the automated teller machine for some quick cash to cover a purchase?

Almost everyone needs to find ways to control spending. And, according to the Michigan Association of CPAs, fall is an excellent time to begin pulling together your financial records and examining your spending habits.

Before you can begin to control spending, you need to know where your money goes. Where should you begin? The first step is to identify all your fixed monthly expenses. Fixed expenses are those that remain pretty much the same from month to month — items like your mortgage or rent payment, car or installment loan payments, insurance, alimony and child support. The amount you spend for these items is probably clearly registered in your mind — or least in your checkbook.

Money Management

Now move on to your variable expenses; those that vary from month to month. The variable expenses you pay for by check, like your electric and telephone bills, can be easily identified.

Other expenses are more difficult to track, especially those for which you pay cash. Do you have any idea how much it costs to run your automobile including gas and repairs? Probably not. How much do you spend dining out? Most families are amazed at how quickly this category can add up. What is your annual tab for gifts to others? If you're like most people, you probably can't answer questions like these because you don't keep track of your spending.

Identifying where your pocket money goes will require a bit of effort. You will want to get a small notebook

or expense record that fits in your pocket or purse to keep a log of daily spending. Jot down everything you spend regardless of whether you pay by cash, check or credit card. It's easier if you identify your

spending by categories that work for you. Some examples are groceries, gifts, commuting costs, haircuts and manicures, clothes, newspapers and magazines. Keep your categories

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