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HEADLINE: Blake Goldring

BYLINE: INTERVIEWED BY PETER EVANS

HIGHLIGHT:

"I love people, and I love different cultures. But Canada is the greatest country in the world"

BODY:

Growing up, my father never suggested or put any pressure on us to follow him into business. He was always certain that each of his kids would find their own thing that they enjoyed and be happy.

Learning different languages is so important. I was all set to drop French in Grade 11, but the teacher said she wasn't going to take my drop form -- she wanted me to work hard and earn it. All of a sudden, the lights went on.

We grew up backing on to a golf course. I used to slip down after school and find lost golf balls to sell to golfers. The best part was when a golfer saw me trying to sell a ball he'd lost back to him. It was a lot of fun, but all those days on the course didn't help my handicap.

When I graduated, I had a lot of job offers. I remember one job in particular was for a cosmetics company in Scandinavia. As a single guy in his 20s, that was very appealing, but I talked to my father and he said Canadian banks are a great training ground. You can learn marketing and the rest later, but it's good to go through the hard-nosed analysis first.

My father has never once second-guessed a decision. The fact is, he's seen it all over the last 50 years.

Coming back to Canada from Europe was a real drag, because I always fancied myself an international businessman. I was expecting to work in London or Paris. And all of a sudden, there I was at King and Bay. It was, frankly, a huge downer.

I think diversification through foreign investment is absolutely key. That's something we definitely believe in. The company was international right from the start: AGF was actually the first American fund offered to Canadian investors. American Growth Fund -- that's the origin of the company's name, right there.

After I joined AGF, in 1987, I worked my way up. Following an acquisition he led in 1996, my father gave me the keys to the car and said, "It's yours -- you drive."

I've never marched. I've never fired a machine gun. But I recently became the honorary colonel of the Royal Regiment of Canada. It's the second-oldest reserve regiment in the country, and what I love about it is that these young men and women from different backgrounds give up their nights, weekends and summers. They're even prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, just for a love of Canada. To me, that's very noble.

I have three daughters, and playing tennis with them is the best thing in the world to me. One of the great things about being a parent is that you nurture

your kids every day while they grow up. And then one day, you get to the point where that tennis ball comes back at you twice as hard, and you can't get to it in time. That's a really cool feeling -- but of course I'd never tell them that.

I remember taking my wife out for our first date. It was an office party and I dropped her off at home. She said thank you, but she thanked somebody completely different. The guy she named was kind of the office joke, with greasy hair and glasses. I was pretty shocked that she thought I was him, but it made me more determined.

A lot of investors save so assiduously. With RRSPs, especially this time of year, people are thinking about the long term. But I sometimes wonder whether people are thinking enough about today as well. Putting forward dreams a long time in the future -- that's important, but you shouldn't forego some of the nice pleasures of living for today. It's all about balance.

Technology and information flow has changed the way investors look at the world. There are so many options. The irony is that with so much information, there's a real need for financial advisers to synthesize all the noise and come up with the best products.

Blake Goldring

Toronto Born Sept. 13, 1958, in Toronto President and CEO, AGF Management Ltd.

1981

Goldring, the son of AGF co-founder Warren Goldring, earns his BA in economics from the University of Toronto.

1982

After getting an MBA from **INSEAD**, he accepts a job with BMO in Paris, before being reposted to Toronto.

1987

Joins AGF, where Goldring takes on responsibility for the investment firm's Japanese and Asian portfolios.

1989

Marries Belinda Priebe, whom he met at BMO, at a ceremony in London. The couple now has three daughters.

1996

Blake Goldring becomes president of AGF. Assets under management grow from \$ 7.5 billion to \$ 37 billion during his tenure.