

From ski champion to hotelier

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ERRATUM

Apology: In the last Helvetia an unfortunate mistake somewhere along the line resulted in a text appearing next to the picture on the front page which had absolutely nothing to do with it at all.

For the readers who wondered what it was all about, here is the correct text which should have appeared next to the picture. Sorry about that folks.

FROM SKI CHAMPION TO HOTELIER

Since Swiss ex-ski champion Pirmin Zurbriggen has given up competitive skiing, he has taken over the family hotel Lärchenhof in Saas Almagell (Wallis). He loves his new activity and enjoys advising his guests about the various walking tracks and ski tours available all around his home village of Saas Almagell. He also likes to acquaint his visitors with some of Wallis' traditions such as cow fights, fendant wine and the famous fondue and raclette, so typical of that canton. But when he can get away from his work, his favourite pastime is to travel to his beloved Zermatt with his family where he owns an apartment with an unobstructed view of the Matterhorn.

FAST BICYCLE

With this bike, Alexander Tschäppät, aged 44, Member of Parliament and Chief Justice of Berne, can beat any professional cyclists. He bought his "Flyer" bike from a firm in Burgdorf which specialises in building into their bikes an electric motor which helps to achieve speeds up to 30km per hour. So he can get to work cool and relaxed instead of covered in sweat. Furthermore he enjoys the stares from other cyclists when he passes them at top speed because they cannot understand how such an "elderly" rider can move so fast and yet remain so elegant and composed. Talking about "unfair" competition!



Alexander Tschäppät on his fast bicycle on his way to work.

TRAFFIC PROBLEMS IN SAAS FEE

The last place on earth where you expect to find a traffic problem must be Saas Fee, one of the few traffic-free holiday resorts in Switzerland. But there it is, sure enough, they have their own type of traffic problem.

Anyone motoring up to Saas Fee (Wallis) must leave the car in a huge car park at the entrance of the village.

Moving around the village itself is either on foot or by small electric cars, the only form of motorised transport allowed in Saas Fee.

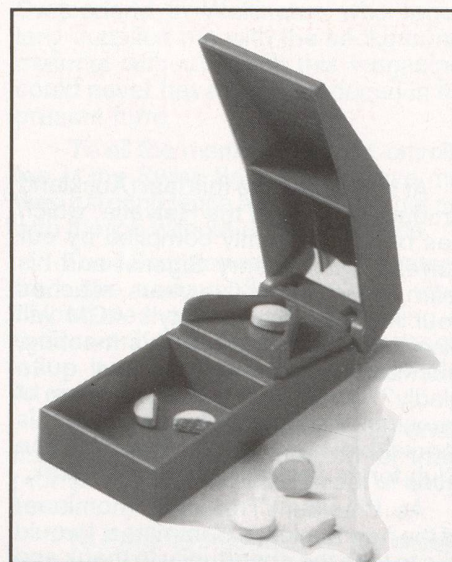
However, over the years, the number of these electric cars has increased to over 245. Additionally, there are numerous cyclists and an ever increasing number of skateboard riders to cope with. All this added up to more and more complaints from pedestrians who often get frightened and annoyed about this silent traffic suddenly overtaking them in the streets.

As a total traffic ban is unthinkable, Saas Fee authorities intend now to introduce a fee for anyone who wants to drive an electric car during "rush hours". To achieve this, each car will be equipped with a small transmitter which will be picked up by a computer when the car crosses strategically placed check-points. Every 6 months, the owners of such cars will then receive an appropriate bill to pay.

Saas Fee has also a speed limit of 15 km per hour. With better and more powerful electric cars, drivers now often exceed this maximum speed limit, a matter which worries the Saas Fee authorities to the point where they plan to introduce speed cameras to catch the culprits.

As you can see, even "traffic free" holiday resorts have their traffic problems.

Some other famous traffic free resorts in Switzerland are Zermatt, Wengen, Mürren and Bettmeralp.



WHAT WILL THEY INVENT NEXT?

Here is a new invention that is going to revolutionise your life: a pill cutter or tablet splitter or whatever you want to call it. If your doctor's prescription tells you to take half a tablet, this ingenious contraption will split your pill exactly into two halves. No more hammer and chisel. All you have to do is pop in a tablet, press the lid down and presto you have two identical half-tablets. How could we have ever been able to survive until now without this marvellous gadget.

MORE DOCTORS IN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland has now some 22,275 registered medical practitioners, a slight increase over the previous years. Accordingly, there is now one doctor for every 318 persons (in previous years there were 334 persons to one doctor). So in theory, the Swiss should be able to expect a better service from their doctors since each one has now 16 fewer patients to look after. If only the theory could be made to match the reality...



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