

Obituaries : Engelbert (BERT) Flühler

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Obituaries



Margrit Suter

22 November 1922 – 15 April 2014

At sixteen years of age, Margrit (Martina) Schwyter arrived in New Zealand from Zürich, Switzerland, together with her parents and her sister. In 1939, Europe was preparing for war, and Margrit's uncle in New Zealand paid for the family to make this life-changing journey.

Leaving England in beautiful weather in the summer, they arrived to a wild, stormy Wellington to start a new life six weeks later.

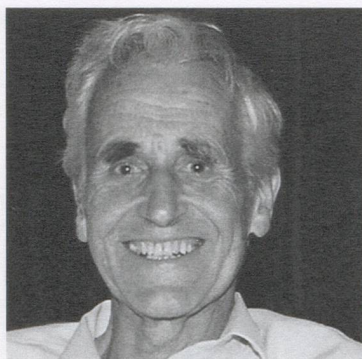
Margrit's uncle, Jacob Schumacher, farmed near Stratford and this is where the new arrivals made their home. There were many new things to learn for this young city girl; helping to hand-milk 35 cows took 3 adults over 3 hours!!!

Margrit met and married Franz Suter who was also Swiss in 1942. During their 46 years of marriage, they farmed in Taranaki, increasing their herd and family at regular intervals. They were blessed with 12 children. Margrit had learned to play the button accordion whilst still in Switzerland, so home was always filled with Swiss music long before the arrival of tapes and CDs.

There were many challenges to overcome. This she appeared to do with ease, although there must have been hard times as well, especially in raising 12 children. Margrit enjoyed all things Swiss: music, cards, kirsch and most of all her homeland.

Margrit enjoyed many trips away with the Swiss club, appreciating the company of her bus companions as well as acquaintances from the other Swiss clubs. Margrit's passion was Jassen, and she participated in many card afternoons and medals competitions, and also attended many club functions over the years. Margrit was nearly always accompanied by her son, Paul, who looked after his mum wonderfully for many, many years. The family were very thankful and appreciative of Paul's terrific care of Margrit.

The Taranaki Swiss Club and the Swiss Society of New Zealand extend their deepest sympathy to the Suter family on the loss of Margrit.



Engelbert (BERT) Flühler

31 August 1929 – 25 February 2014

Bert was born in Luzern, the 5th of 7 children, and grew up in Seeburg, Küssnacht am Rigi. His parents, Engelbert Flühler Snr and Marie Flühler-Wiggli, worked hard and ran the restaurant "Seeburg", timber mill, boatshed, camping ground and swimming complex on the edge of the Lake of Luzern.

1936 – 1945. Bert attended school in Küssnacht and then went as a boarder to the French Institute "Marini" in Montet-Broye, Fribourg, where he learnt French.

1946-1950. Bert was an apprentice at the Gewerbeschule Luzern, learning the trade "Elektro-Mechaniker," after which he worked for two years for Autophon in Solothurn.

14th May, 1952. After completing his obligatory military service, he and his brother Alfred embarked with one-way tickets on their sea voyage from Naples, Italy, via Australia to New Zealand. They arrived on 24th June and were met by Louis Holzgang, fellow Küssnächter, who found Bert work with the NZ Railways workshop and accommodation at Gracefield Camp, Wainuiomata.

In December of that year, Bert met Josie Bitossi at the United Nations Club in Wellington and her family home soon became the surrogate home for Bert and his Swiss friends who were living so far from their own families.

1953. Bert shifted into a bed-sit in central Wellington and was employed by Mr. Mucha (originally from Germany) as a toolmaker for Agmar Machinery and Tools in Petone. He worked long hours there and weekends for David Thwaites Catering business in Karori. 15th November 1958 Bert and Josie were married and shifted into their own chalet style home in South Karori, Wellington.

8th June, 1960. Belinda was born, then two months later the Flühler Snrs bravely flew from Switzerland to visit.

March 1961. Bert and Josie with baby Belinda accompanied the Flühler Snrs back to Switzerland, travelling by ship to Naples and train to Switzerland. During their time in Switzerland, Bert worked as a foreman for Mikafil Engineering, Zürich, with 32 men

under his guidance, whilst Josie gained certificates in cooking and restaurant service, as well as studying piano at the Zürich Conservatorium of Music.

September – October 1962. Bert attended the Schweizerische Hotelfachschule, Luzern and gained a Certificate in Cuisine. They returned to New Zealand, Wellington in December 1962.

June 1963. Bert and Josie opened their "Swiss Chalet" Restaurant and brought continental cuisine to Hamilton.

April 1964. Peter was born and in May 1965, Trudi arrived.

1974. Bert became a New Zealand citizen but was still intensely proud of his homeland. He had been a core member of the Wellington Swiss Club in the late 1950s and from 1963, joined the Hamilton Swiss Club and became very involved in activities like shooting, bowling and even catering for functions and Jass evenings. He became Vice President in the late 1970s then President of the Hamilton Swiss Club from 1980-1981. He helped with the production of the Helvetia magazine and in 1998 was awarded a Certificate of Honorary Membership by the Swiss Society of New Zealand.

1976. Bert and Josie sold the restaurant as Bert had health issues and in 1977 underwent a quadruple by-pass in Greenlane Hospital, Auckland. The operation was successful and he was able to return to his original trade as a toolmaker and worked for Ernst Staheli at Micro Precision Engineers, training many apprentices until his retirement.

After his retirement, he pursued many different hobbies like wood turning, stained glass and gardening and now had more time to travel in New Zealand, Australia, Europe and back to Switzerland.

The last 16 months of his life were spent in Selwyn Sunningdale Resthome where, although very frail, he became known by the staff and residents as "the smiler."

During his diverse life he has touched the lives of many people with his sense of humour, generosity, honesty, loyalty and friendship. Bert is survived by his wife Josie, Belinda and Paul, Peter and Andrea, Trudi and Bill, eight grandchildren, three great-grandsons, two brothers and two sisters.

This article was written with love by Josie and family.



The Hamilton Club and the Swiss Society extend heartfelt sympathies to the families and friends concerned