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## TEXAS

# Swiss Society of South Texas Celebrates Christmas at the Inn

Some forty members of the Swiss Society of South Texas gathered for their annual Christmas event at the Inn of the Hills Resort & Conference Center in Kerrville Texas—a holiday tradition that began several years ago.

Among those attending were the Consul General of Switzerland in Houston, Armin Meile and his wife Rosine, Rudi and Eva Gutmann, Josef Seiterle (president) and wife Henrietta, Rolf Glauser (VP) and wife Jean, Beatrice (Trixie) Newham (treasurer) and husband Paul, Rudolf Bettenmann, Dorothee (Myrta) and Siegfried Richter, Bernard and Heidi Thoeni, Nina and Elke Petrow, Joe Sigg,



**The annual gathering of the Swiss Society of Southern Texas took place at the Inn of the Hills Resort & Conference Center in Kerrville Texas—a holiday tradition that began several years ago**



**Secretary Rolf Glauser with (from left) Tara, Kelly, and Sarah Schlunegger**

Hanspeter and Maria Tobler, Peter, Dorie and Sarah Hess, Nelly and Wayne Young, Anita Turner, Elie and Cathie Guggenheim, hosts Annemarie and Hansueli Schlunegger and their children: Marian, Kurt and wife Tara, Ueli and wife Kelly with daughter Sarah.

The members met at the Inn of the Hills lobby for a short ride to the home of Annemarie and Hansueli Schlunegger, where they indulged on fine Texas wines, cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. Hans took

to the grand piano and the home quickly resounded with folklore and Christmas caroling. This was followed by an elaborate dinner of Consommé Royal, Salad Valencia, Beef Diane,

fresh Berries and Vanilla wafers at the Inn's new Conference Center. President Seiterle presented Consul General Armin Meile with a farewell present, as the Consulate in Houston will close in 2006, to everyone's disappointment.

Most of the members spent the night at the Inn of the Hills, and

met again for breakfast at the Inn's Alpine Lodge Restaurant for casual conversation.

*Hansueli Schlunegger*



**From left to right: Consul General Armin Meile, Rudi Gutmann and wife Eva, Elke Betrow and daughter Nina, Rosine Meile, Jay Shaw**

## Next Regional News:

# 3/2006

Copy deadline: May 03

Mailing date: June 15

# 5/2006

Copy deadline: September 07

Mailing date: October 18

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## FLORIDA

# Swiss American Club of Southwest Florida

The members of the Swiss American Club of Southwest Florida continue to enjoy a diverse program for their monthly get-togethers. In October, twenty-one members and ten guests met at a local country club for a dinner and an evening of Bingo. On the first Saturday in November a small group ventured to the Broadway Palms

guesthouse, which was decorated with our new club flag. Many seasonal visitors were back just in time for this popular club event. Everybody enjoyed the excellent dinner, home-made by the board members and their spouses: Pork roast with mushroom gravy, "Spätzli", red cabbage and Panettone for dessert. The weather allowed for sitting comfortably outside for several hours.



**Hostess and Club President Rosmarie Strother chatting with Maria and Franz Von Atzingen**

Dinner Theater in Fort Myers and saw "The Man of La Mancha."

The big event of the holiday season was the traditional "Chlaus-hock" at the president's house in Naples. Forty people joined the outdoor party in the front yard of Rosmarie's Swiss-Chalet-Style

been lifted. Thirty people boarded the "Cookie Cutter" in Cape Harbour for a three-and-a-half-hour cruise through the inland waters. But the boat could not cast off before the champagne and wine were brought on board. After all, this was the club's "ring in the



**Getting ready for the Chlaus-hock-Dinner, prepared by the board-members: Pork Roast with Mushroom Gravy, Spätzli, Red Cabbage and Panettone for Dessert.**

new year" cruise! The champagne corks popped, and Captain Tom's assistant started to serve meat and cheese trays on all three decks. Despite the cold, everybody was in a happy mood.

After cruising through the Pine Island Sound, along the Sanibel Island shoreline, the "Cookie Cutter" returned back to the "Rum-runners" Restaurant, where the group disembarked and enjoyed a leisurely lunch.

On Monday, February 6, nineteen members and two guests met

at the Galaxy Lanes in Fort Myers for the annual bowling event. After a buffet dinner of chicken wings, salads, cookies and fruit, teams for the game were formed. As always, the team from Punta Gorda had astronomically high scores compared to the other rather mediocre players. But obviously everybody had lots of fun.

*Text by Eva Stern, condensed by Rosmarie Strother, Rosmarief37@aol.com  
pictures by Vreni Gerber and Peter Zahner*



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**Partial view of the guests at the Chlaus-hock-Dinner: The weather allowed for sitting comfortably outside.**



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**HOW SWISS ARE YOU?** Are you one of the million or so Americans of Swiss descent? Maybe you're not sure but want to figure out if your ancestry is flavored with Switzerland's rich cultural heritage... and get in touch with your newly found relatives? Perhaps you live in one of the four thousand American cities and towns with Swiss names and want to find out more about the country that gave birth to your hometown's name? Maybe you're just a fan of all things Swiss and curious about what makes this idyllic, mountainous, breathtakingly beautiful country and its people tick? Regardless of what sparks your interest, **VISIT [WWW.SWISSROOTS.ORG](http://WWW.SWISSROOTS.ORG) AND FIND OUT HOW SWISS YOU REALLY ARE.**



# swiss roo+s

[www.swissroots.org](http://www.swissroots.org) The Website is on!

The "Swiss Roots" Website – which launched on March 29, 2006 – is an innovative new Internet platform with two main features: a genealogical search engine, which invites Americans to explore their Swiss heritage and ancestry, and a number of interactive Web-communities allowing users to share their Swiss stories and experiences.

## "Swiss Roots" Web Community

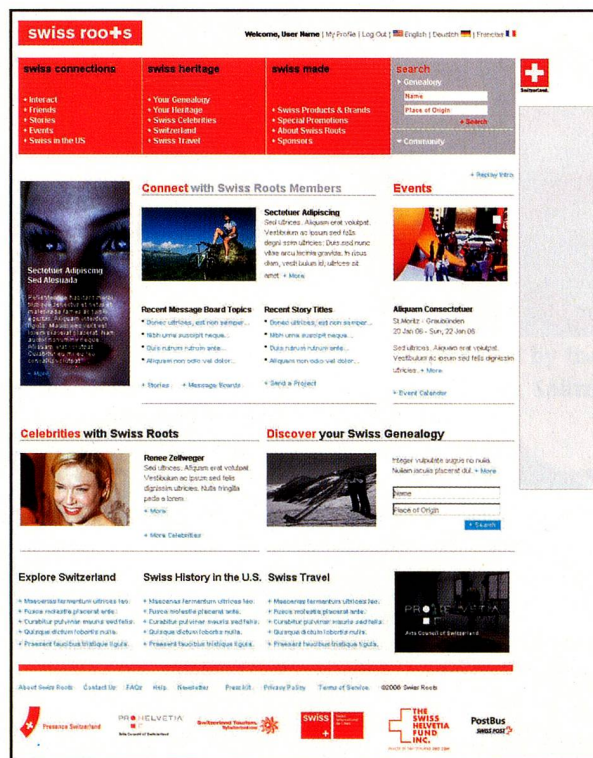
The idea behind the "Swiss Roots" community is for people to share information, advice, photos, and experiences, and their passion for what Switzerland has brought to the world. Sophisticated database applications allow users to search and sort member stories, and provide personalized content. Members can set up friends networks and can easily contact one another to ask questions, exchange

information, and build friendships without geographic boundaries. In return for writing their stories, Swiss Roots members accrue valuable points redeemable for gift certificates, Swiss Roots merchandise, and other rewards. The community also includes message boards, an interactive calendar of local and national Swiss events, and access to thousands of reviews on Switzerland destinations.

## Genealogical Search and Heritage

A wealth of information has been put together for Americans of Swiss descent who want to find out about their ancestors, where they came from, and what life was like in the Switzerland they left behind. In the genealogy section, a number of different databases – including Ellis Island passenger lists, revised to correct misspellings – make it possible to search for ancestors by name and/or place of origin for free. Via links to the homepages of these Swiss localities, users can find out what these places are like today, and even plan a visit to their ancestors' original hometowns.

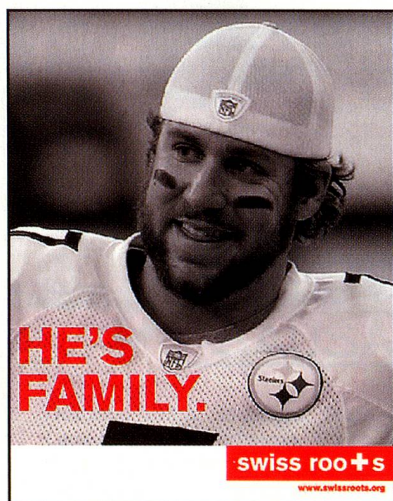
In the "Heritage" section, Web users find an illustrated time line with events related to Swiss and American history, enabling them to see what was happening in both countries when their ancestors made their momentous decision to cross the Atlantic. A series of portraits describes the great contribution to American



society made by Swiss immigrants and Americans of Swiss descent, in all fields of human endeavour, from inventors and businessmen – like Louis Chevrolet to Milton Hershey – to politicians like Herbert Hoover to film stars like Yul

Brynner and Renee Zellweger; and many, many more. There is something on the Swiss Roots Web site for every taste, including items such as typical Swiss recipes.

*Mirjam Suter*  
[Swissroots@nyc.rep.admin.ch](mailto:Swissroots@nyc.rep.admin.ch)



**He will travel to Switzerland to discover his roots. When will you? He is Ben Roethlisberger. What's your name and origin?**

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## PENNSYLVANIA

# Swiss Federal Charter in Philadelphia

"Swiss Roots" brings the Swiss Federal Charter of 1291, known as the "Schweizer Bundesbrief," to Philadelphia's National Constitution Center. This occasion marks the first time this 715-year-old historic document has even been shown outside of Switzerland.

The Federal Charter is the focal point of the newly designed exhibition, "The Sister Republics," highlighting 300 years of Swiss immigration to the U.S., participation in the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars, and contributions to American culture and history. The exhibit will open June 10, 2006, and will remain in Philadelphia for three weeks. To help celebrate the occasion, former Swiss president Arnold Koller will participate in a town hall meeting. Koller, a constitutional lawyer and father of the modern Swiss Constitution, will give an historical review of the cross-pollination between the Swiss and U.S. constitutions and the direct democracy movement in the U.S.

Mirjam Suter, [Swissroots@nyc.rep.admin.ch](mailto:Swissroots@nyc.rep.admin.ch)



The Swiss Federal Charter of 1291 (Bundesbrief) is normally kept at a museum (Bundesbrief-museum) in the town of Schwyz. For the first time in 751 years this historic document is being shown outside of Switzerland.

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## CALIFORNIA

# Swiss Biking Legend to donate Bikes for Africa

'Wheels 4 Life' was founded by extreme biking legend and former Mountain Bike World Cham-



**Sturdy 6-speed bicycles, specially designed for rural areas and easy to replace components just arrived in Africa**

pion Hans Rey [hansrey.com]. This charity is a non-profit organization (non-profit 501(c)(3) status) that provides bikes for people in Third-World countries in need of transportation to get to work or to school; including health care workers.

Hans has been a professional athlete for 20 years, he still travels the world promoting biking and riding the unridable. He has been competing and demonstrating his talents in 60 countries; in recent years he has been filming documentaries with his 'Hans Rey

Adventure Team', combining his extreme biking skills with different cultures and always in search of something historical or mysterious.

With 'Wheels 4 Life' Hans wants to give something back to the people he met on his journeys, he is very grateful for the opportunities and career he had through the sport.

A bicycle can make all the difference in a person's life. It can be the difference between having a job or not, going to school or not,

seeing a doctor or being seen by a doctor or not, etc.

Swiss citizen Hans says: "For us, bicycles are recreational equipment, for some people it can be survival. I have met

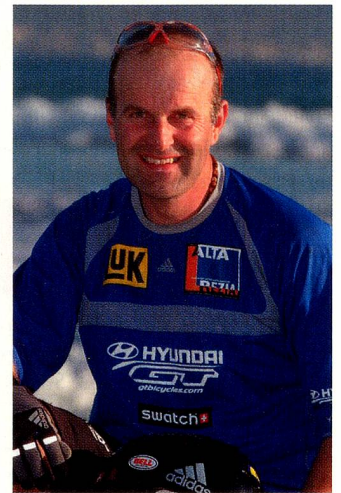
and sometimes worked with people who make much less than 200 Dollars per year. Often they live in

remote villages and the only form of transportation they have is their feet. It is often too long of a walk to get to a job, go to school or to the market to sell their goods. 'Wheels 4 Life' will also support healthcare workers, nurses and doctors to enable them to be more mobile, allowing them to see more patients in less time. I'm working with local agencies, organizations, schools and health care groups to assure the bikes donated will end up in the hands of people who really need them."

All of Rey's work is on a volunteer basis. He pays all of his own expenses while working for W4L.

He will keep administrative costs to a minimum to assure that the maximum amount of money goes to purchasing bikes. A donation of

\$150 will buy a person a brand-new 6-speed bicycle that is specially designed for the rural areas



**Hans Rey: "A bicycle can make all the difference in a person's life".**

and has durable, easy-to-replace components. This price includes shipping to Africa and duties.

## How can you help?

See below for detailed information.

Hans Rey wishes to thank his Swiss compatriots very much for their consideration and support.

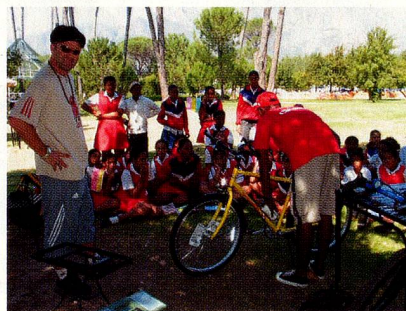
For more information, go to:

<http://www.hansrey.com>

<http://www.wheels4life.org>

Wal Baur

[wbaur@adelphia.net](mailto:wbaur@adelphia.net)



**Young Africans - getting a first look at the new bikes**

## Donations

By credit card or PayPal via the web-site: [www.wheels4life.org](http://www.wheels4life.org)

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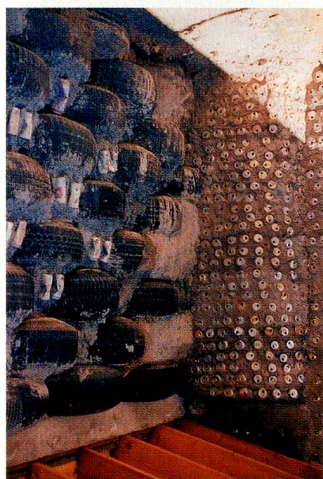
**Laguna Beach, CA 92652**



## NEW MEXICO

## My Earthship

In Switzerland I grew up in the country, a remote area called the "Hinterthurgau". After spending a working career in Zurich and Los Angeles, I knew it was time to return to the countryside once I retired, but where?

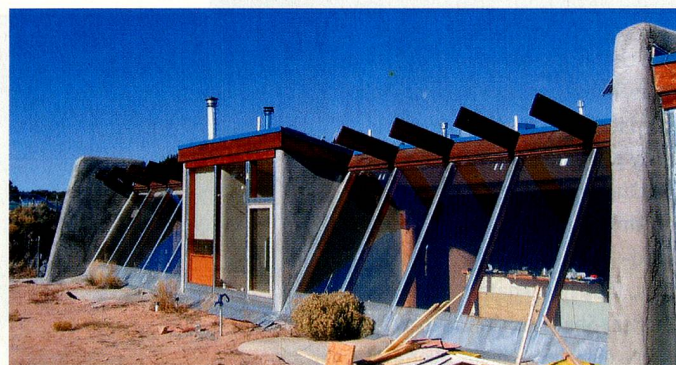


**Adobe-filled tires and empty alu-cans build the walls**

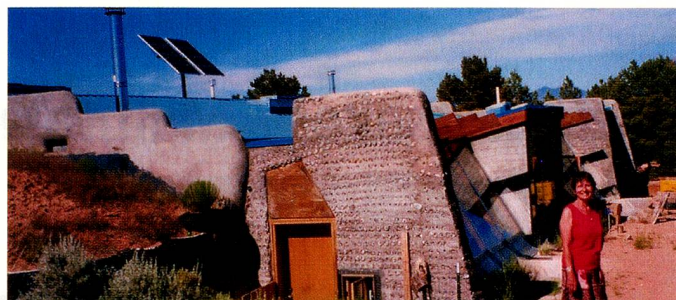
A friend of mine, a Contractor had taken a class in Taos with Architect Michael Reynolds, the creator of the "Earthship". This is an earth rammed structure; the main walls are built with tires that have two wheelbarrows of soil pounded into them. Aluminum cans are placed in between the tires to increase insulation. Two coats of plaster, then two to three coats of Adobe (mud, straw and sand) cover the walls.

The huge slanted windows along the front of the house facilitate the process of passive solar heating. In the winter more sun warms the thermal mass and the house remains warm and cozy all night long. Water is collected on the roof into a 3000-gallon cistern and is pumped through several filters back into the house. The sun also provides the electricity. There are approximately 310 days of sunshine in New Mexico. In large planters in front of the windows, herbs or topical plants grow wildly.

Three friends and I searched for land around Taos. We found this forestland with Pinion and Juniper trees and bought forty acres together in 1992, but each of us planned to build their own home. In 1993 my friend started to build



**The slanted windows let in the sun and facilitate the process of passive solar heating.**

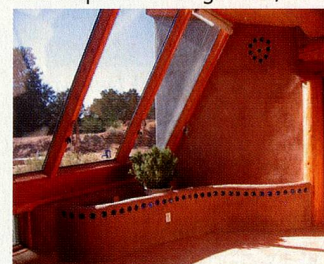


**The author in front of a finished "Earthship"**

my house. The construction is very labor intensive and can be quite costly. Over the years I would travel to New Mexico often to consult with the builder.

Finally in the spring of 2004 I retired. I moved all my belongings into storage, bought a small Fiberglass trailer and started a new life at high altitude (7000 ft) out in Nature, about fifty minutes drive from Taos on mostly dirt roads. The building process moved along slowly: at the beginning of the first winter I had to return to California. It was so cold in my trailer that the canned dog food had to be placed in the fridge to keep it warm.

Now, the house is close to completion, my patience has been tested with this project. This home is truly a piece of art and it functions perfectly. In the summer earthships tend to get hot, so I



**Grey water will irrigate the plants in the adobe-planter**

installed shades and a fan. Also a draft can be created from the skylights to the small lower front windows.

I have a toilet that runs on Propane, so waste can be burned up. This way I will pump up the grey water from the septic tank for the greenhouse. I love the high desert, the mountains, the starry nights and peace and quiet.

More information on building your own "Earthship" can be obtained from: [www.earthship.com](http://www.earthship.com)  
*Elisabeth Maier*  
[elisamaier@earthlink.net](mailto:elisamaier@earthlink.net)

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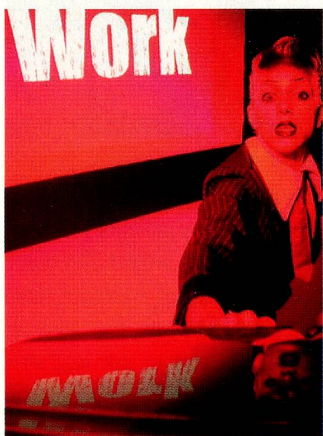
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## FLORIDA

# Natasha Tsakos - Multitalented Silence



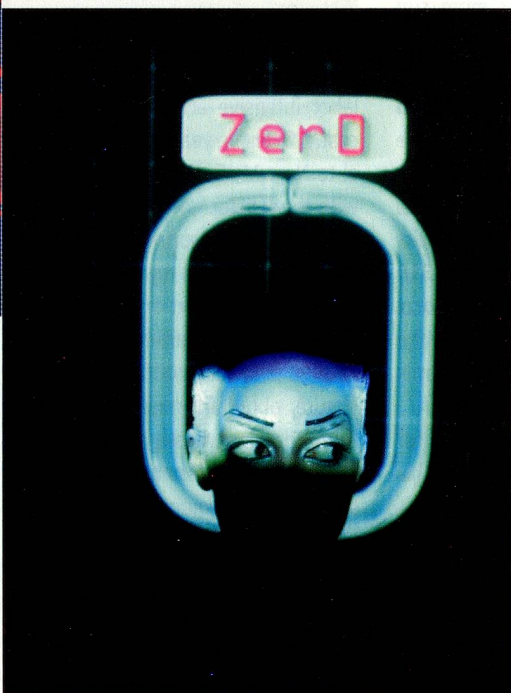
**The many faces of Natasha**  
- pictures from the show  
"Up Wake"

"Just so you know, I left Geneva when I was 14/15 years old and moved to Miami. After graduating in 2000, I have been performing professionally ever since and do dream of going back to Switzerland.... eventually.... like Charlie Chaplin at the end of his life...."

This is how Natasha introduced herself. When she speaks, one can still hear a trace of French in her English. But then, her performance art does not require speech. On the contrary, Natasha wants to move away from words and express herself with music, movements and light. She has dedicated the last four years to create "Up Wake", commissioned by The Miami Light Project and co-commissioned by the Miami Performing Arts Center since 2004, opening in its full

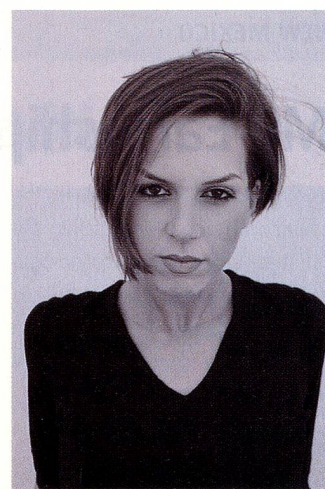
length version in February 2006.

"Up Wake" is a humane and tragic comedy following Zero, a



Natasha has filmed a documentary. From Film, to Theatre, she also tackled the Visual Arts. In 1999 she was accepted at one of the nation's top conservatories: "New World School of the Arts" and graduated in 2000 with a BFA. Natasha has also written 12 books, directed 20 plays including her own, is the lead performer of the nationally acclaimed performance troupe Circ X, and a Doctor Clown for The Big Apple Circus (NY).

The next performances of "Up Wake III" are sched-



**The private face of Natasha Tsakos**

uled to premiere at the Miami Performing Arts Center in November/December 2006.

Would you like to know more? The web-site [www.natashatsakos.com](http://www.natashatsakos.com) contains additional information on multi-talented Natasha and her work.

Wal Baur  
[wbaur@adelphia.net](mailto:wbaur@adelphia.net)

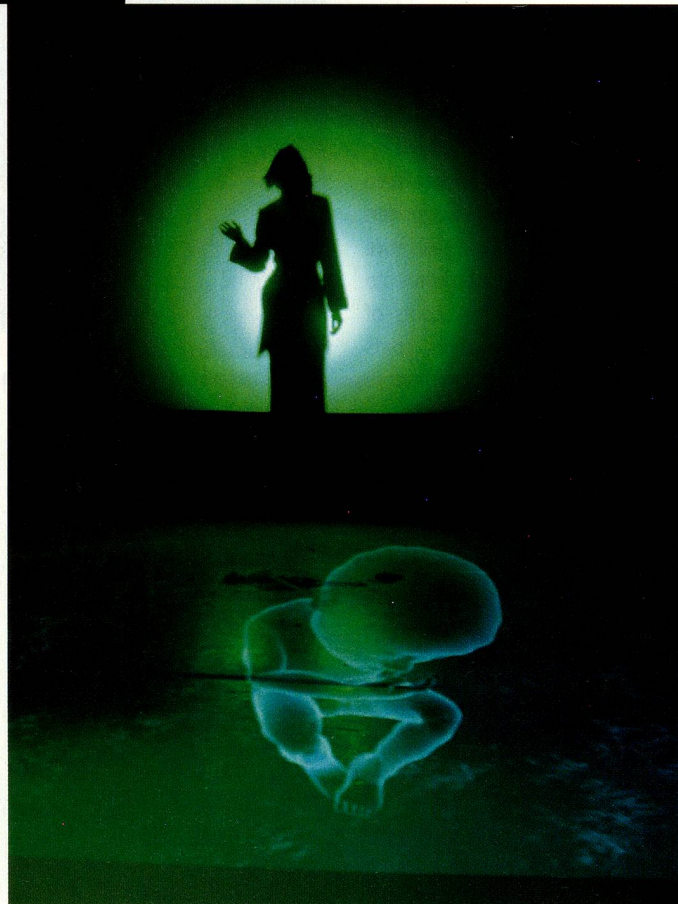


length version in February 2006. "Up Wake" is a humane and tragic comedy following Zero, a

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## GEORGIA

## Swiss Consulate General in Atlanta moves to new office

As of beginning of June 2006, the consular representation in Atlanta will be located at the following new address:

Consulate General of Switzerland  
Two Midtown Plaza, Suite 1000  
1349 West Peachtree Street  
Atlanta, GA 30309

Telephone, Fax and e-mail shall remain the same as follows:

Tel: (404) 870-2000

Fax: (404) 870-2011

e-mail:

Vertretung@atl.rep.admin.ch

Web-site:

[www.eda.admin.ch/atlanta](http://www.eda.admin.ch/atlanta)

Due to the permanent closure of our Consulate General in Houston, the jurisdiction will now comprise 4 additional States. This means Atlanta is handling all questions per-

taining to the Swiss citizens living in the states of Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, North & South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas.

More than 13,000 Swiss citizens are now registered with the Consulate General in Atlanta. Despite an additional staff member coming from Houston, this big workload will have to be absorbed by all of the very devoted staff. Besides the numerous additional work related to the moving and taking over of the files from Houston, we will do our best to assist you in a timely manner.

With kind regards,  
*Ulrich Hunn*  
Consul General of Switzerland



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## FLORIDA

## Sleeping like you were used to?

### The Swiss Sleep System Comes to America

Remember the "Lättli-Beds" you had at home? A Swiss company called Lattotflex first developed the Swiss Sleep System in 1956, and over the next twenty-plus years, a bevy of competing brands cropped up. The system became so popular in Switzerland that it essen-

square-foot showroom in Costa Rica's capital of San José. In November 2004, Jann brought the Swiss Sleep System to the United States.

"We are not a furniture store," said Jann. "We are not a mattress store. We are a store that provides a personalized, good night's rest. We listen to our clients, and we

natural, comprised of materials like cotton, silk, latex, camel hair and sheep wool. Each mattress is complimented and supported by a sophisticated but lightweight base made of slats. In other words, no

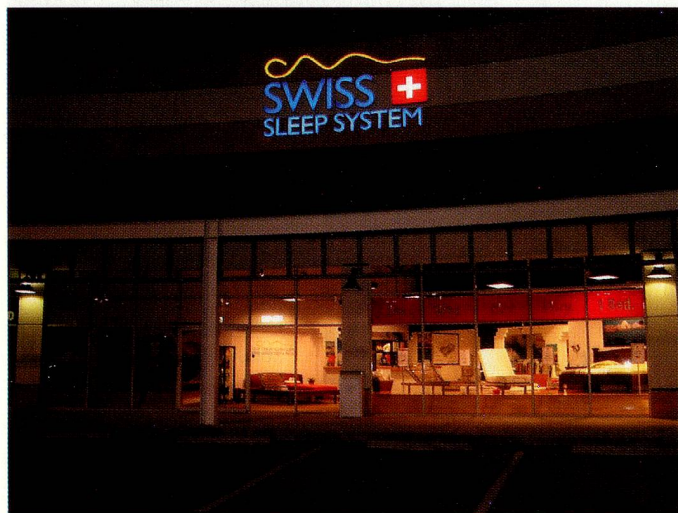
box springs. The laminated beech wood slats are removable and highly flexible. Each slat has a suspension system and pressure cells that slide along to create tension for your needy areas. The open slats also allow fresh air to enter, and enable dust mites, dander and

other irritants to easily fall to the floor - instead of trapping them in a traditional box spring.

To find out more about the Swiss Sleep System, go to [www.SwissSleepSystem.com](http://www.SwissSleepSystem.com), or call the store at 305-232-4738  
Jorge Luis Molina



**At the manufacturing plant of BICO in Schänis, Switzerland, From left to right: Roman Jann, Manager, Miami, Martin Frutig, CEO BICO and Roy Garnier, Investor, Costa Rica/Miami**



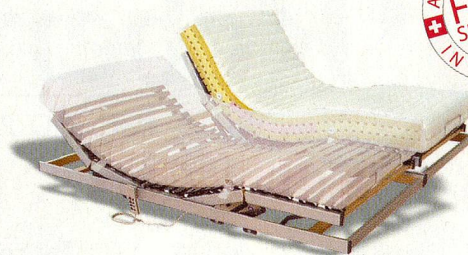
### The Miami store of Swiss Sleep Systems

tially phased out the standard box spring and mattress setup. In fact, approximately 70 percent of beds in Central Europe now utilize the system.

As a child growing up in Glarus, Switzerland, Roman Jann became intimately familiar with the system. After growing tired of trying to sleep in less sophisticated beds during business trips, Jann started the Swiss Sleep System in his adopted home of Costa Rica in 1999. In year three of operations, he opened a sparkling, 10,000

listen to what needs they have. We can provide a system that can improve the quality of life for every body. A good bed is important. This is where you spend one-third of your lifetime."

"The system" Jann is referring to combines a state-of-the-art mattress with a unique slat base that work in harmony to create an entirely new way of sleeping. The mattresses are much thinner, lighter, longer lasting, healthier and safer than the traditional, cumbersome mattress and are all



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## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## Swiss Joy for the disabled

Sometimes it takes little effort to make others happy! Being Swiss could be the key to such experience. I am employed by a social services agency in Orange County, Southern California. My background is in mental health and my position incorporates social work. I assist HIV/AIDS patients by providing services and lending them emotional support on their journey. When diagnosed with AIDS the immune system is seriously compromised and they may only have a few years left. They typically experience multiple losses; their jobs and businesses cease. Health insurance stops, individual policies are unaffordable. They lose their homes, cars and their savings. Friends often disappear and sometimes the family abandons them.

As all human beings long for happy moments and a ray of warm sunshine, I suggested to the agency taking our clients on a virtual tour of Switzerland.

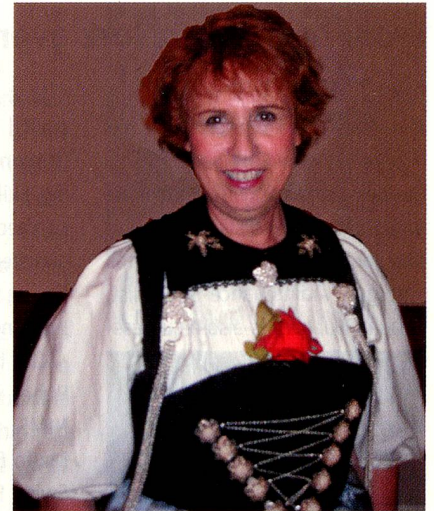
The participants followed the narrated picture presentation with great interest, watched the video attentively and listened carefully to Swiss folklore music. They admired the colorful Swiss Franc bills and loved to hear about Swiss-American champion Louis Chevrolet, Henry Dunant, Red Cross Founder and the Schindler escalators.

Lots of questions popped up as they leafed through Swiss folklore books: They wanted to know about Swiss Government and its political parties. They were curious about the climate. Was the Matterhorn like the one in Disneyland? How about the transportation system, Swiss castles, health insurance and HIV services, foods and customs? They were appalled learning about the high gasoline prices, the cost of living and renting an apartment and concluded that they were better off remaining in California. They laughed heartily when they learned about the significance of decorating cows for an Alpauzug

and thoughtfully commented that the Swiss probably eat no Hamburgers. They declared the alphorn a rather remarkable instrument: "How can anybody play this thing?"

Globe Delicatessen in Costa Mesa catered lunch. Some clients cautiously tasted their first Bratwurst and Rotkraut. They thought Süssmost with lunch was an innovation. Swiss chocolate for dessert was an immediate hit. They unanimously decided that if money were no object they would visit Switzerland. Following the "tour" happy faces boarded the bus to return home to their modest lives.

Bringing Swiss joy to folks who no longer have the means and the health to travel was my pleasure with great reward! We Swiss ARE our own resources! May I encourage you to try your own virtual



**Hilde Birchmeier in her beautiful Swiss costume - the Berner Festtagstracht**

tour? All you need is a couple of hours at your own convenience and a selected group in your community. Expect Swiss joy to be contagious! Enjoy and have fun!

*Hilda Birchmeier, Psy.D.  
Rancho Santa Margarita, CA  
hzb\_psyd@yahoo.com*

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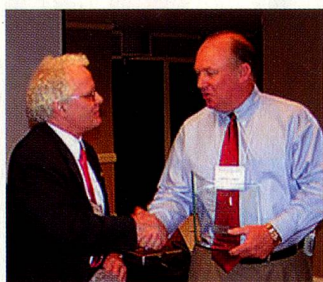


## CONNECTICUT

# From Pääli Huber to Paul Huber

## From organizing Jazz evenings in Basel to CEO and President of NIMS

"My plans were to stay only for a few years when I stepped off the 'France' in New York early 1962." Besides completing his machinist apprenticeship and serving time in the Swiss Army as a small arms and gun maintenance specialist, "Pääli" Huber was also a success-



**Bobby Veach, right, congratulates Paul Huber who became the new President of NIMS**

ful manager who organized Jazz-evenings in Basel. He says: "Looking back I feel very good about my achievements here and also in Basel where, 18 years after I left, the musicians still remember me."

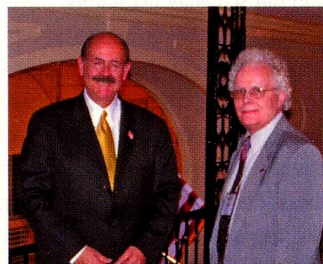
Last year, Paul Huber was installed as President of the NIMS (National Institute for Metalworking Skills) Board of Directors. He succeeds Bobby Veach, who administered the NIMS Oath of Office at the Board meeting held in Washington, DC.

On hand to congratulate Mr. Huber on his ascendancy to the NIMS President position was Mario Brossi, Staff member of the Swiss Embassy and representing the Swiss Ambassador in the United States.

NIMS is in its tenth year as a nonprofit organization dedicated to the development of a globally competitive workforce for the American metalworking industry. NIMS establishes and maintains national skill standards, certifies individual skills and accredits training programs that meet its standards. NIMS is accredited by the American National Standards Institute as a Developer of Ameri-

can National Standards. There are 24 sets of NIMS skill standards and 146 NIMS accredited training programs. NIMS has issued over 10,000 individual credentials.

Mr. Huber learned the metalworking trade in Europe before



**Al Frink (left), Assistant Secretary for Manufacturing & Services, US Department of Commerce and Paul Huber**

immigrating to the United States from his native Switzerland. He is a Swiss Technical School Graduate as a toolmaker/screw machine specialist and interned as Sales and Service Engineer with American Bechler Corporation in Stam-

ford, Connecticut (now Tornos Technologies in Brookfield, Connecticut) and Esco, Les-Geneveys-sur-Coffrane, NE, Switzerland.

Mr. Huber is Chief Executive Officer of Industrial Precision Components Corporation, Bridgeport, Connecticut. He founded the company in 1968 as a supplier of machinery and tooling to users of Swiss Automatics. He is also President of Continental Machinery Exchange Corporation (COMEX), dealers in new and used machine tools.

Thomas Lynch

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