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# REGIONAL NEWS

## UNITED STATES

### Editorial

Dear readers/compatriots,

These 8 pages of the Swiss Review are mostly dedicated to news and events of a few of the many Swiss Clubs in the U.S. It's refreshing to read that activities in person have picked up. How great it is to enjoy our Swiss roots in this peaceful environment. Sometimes I think we expats appreciate our Swiss traditions more than Swiss people

living in Switzerland.

I'm also featuring some extraordinary Swiss people in the U.S. that have achieved great accomplishments. You'll find their stories on the first and last page.

The deadline for articles for the next regional USA issue is August 30 with a publishing date of October 7.

I wish you a grand August 1st celebration and a safe summer time.

DORIS BERNATH CUNNINGHAM, EDITOR

## Two Swiss Expats Dominate at the 2022 1000 mi Iditarod Foot Race

The 1000-mile Iditarod Trail Invitational (ITI) is the world's longest winter ultra-marathon that follows the historic Iditarod Trail from Anchorage to Nome. Athletes can complete the race on bicycle, foot, or skis, and will have to brave extreme physical, environmental, and mental challenges. Requiring self-sufficiency and extreme resiliency, the ITI has built its reputation on notoriously inhospitable conditions and minimal outside support.

In this year's edition, two Swiss expats dominated the 1000 mile race: Veteran ITI foot racer Beat Jegerlehner won the race in 22d 22h 42m (his 6th finish and 2nd win) and rookie Christof Teuscher finished 2nd in 24d and 45m.

Beat was born in Bern but grew up in Germany and earned his PhD in physics from the Max-Planck-Institute for Physics in Munich. After discovering his love for endurance running while living in the Silicon Valley, he now works as a software engineer for Google in Boulder, Colorado.

Christof grew up in the Berner Oberland and earned his PhD degree in computer science from the Swiss



### ITI 2022

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=1127121221367255>

<https://itialaska.com>



Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL) in Lausanne. He is now a full professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering department at Portland State University in Oregon, where he leads a research team that focuses on next generation computing models

and architectures.

Both Beat and Christof are seasoned ultra-endurance athletes who have competed in many of the hardest races around the world.

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## New York: Swiss Society of New York

It's wonderful to see how the streets of New York City are bustling again with locals and people from across the globe alike.

**"While the city is coming back with a familiar yet refreshing energy, we are excited about a boost of new community members due to our newly launched website [www.swisssociety.org](http://www.swisssociety.org)."**

Furthermore, we strengthened our leadership team with new members who are excited to bring you updated membership and sponsoring concepts. With this momentum we have started to re-launch in-person events to once again connect face to face with our wonderful community.

Our fondue night at La Bonne Soupe in March marked the first larger in-person event in 2022 and it was a pleasure to bring so many Swiss people and friends of Switzerland back together. While the attendees were able to enjoy the amazing food, the evening was framed by speeches from Ambassador Markus Börlin and Daniel Schaufelberger, President of the SSNY.

Besides several smaller events such as the upcoming golf tournament or the summer kick-off get together, all eyes are now focused on the Swiss National Day celebration, which will take place at Tavern on the Green in Central Park on July 30th. As the event had to be cancelled in the previous two years, everyone will be looking



forward to a typical Swiss buffet including raclette, bratwurst with potato salad, and other Swiss specialties. Besides our delicious food and drinks menu, the musical highlight will be a concert by Linus Wyrsch and Alexia Gardner. The event is being organized in partnership with the Consulate General of Switzerland, various Swiss organizations in New York, and generously supported by numerous sponsors. So please head to our webpage and secure your ticket now.

DR. DANIEL SCHAUFELBERGER, PRESIDENT

For more information about upcoming events or our new leadership team, visit our website [www.swisssociety.org](http://www.swisssociety.org) or contact Jan Furrer, [jan@swisssociety.org](mailto:jan@swisssociety.org)

## Northern California: Swiss Benevolent Society of San Francisco

The Swiss Benevolent Society of San Francisco held its annual Seniors Luncheon outdoors at Swiss Park in Newark, California. Fifty Swiss seniors attended, and everyone was presented with Ghirardelli chocolates by SBS president Ruedi Sandmeier. Those over 70 years of age got a free traditional lunch of bratwurst with all the trimmings. The meal was prepared by Bob Fuchsli, manager of Swiss Park, and served by members of the Aelpler Gruppe Swiss club. Nancy Attinger, 90, and Angela Sartori, 95, got a large basket of treats. Two women, Rosalie Moresi and Rosemary Ramsell, were both born on February 16, 1922. They celebrated their 100th birthday with cognac included in their special baskets.



CARLA TWITCHELL  
SBS BOARD MEMBER

100 year old  
Rosalie Moresi is on  
the left and Rosemary  
Ramsell is with her  
daughter Marilyn.

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## Northern California: San Joaquin Valley Swiss Club

The San Joaquin Valley Swiss Club is featuring three Schwingfests this year. Our Spring Schwingfest welcomes both Buebe, Jr. and Senior Schwingers; our Member BBQ (we are over 650 members) and Buebe/Meitli Schwingfest for those 16 and under is on July 30th; and on September 10th will be the 64th Annual Championship Schwingfest for all ages. We will have approximately 7 guest wrestlers from Switzerland coming to compete. This follows the Eidgenössisches Schwingfest that will take place in Basel this year on August 26-28th.

We recently had our Swinger Dinner/Dance in April and we honored Don Widmer of Lathrop, CA who 50 years ago competed in the Eidgenössisches Schwingfest in 1972 and won an Eidgenössische Crown. Don was the first American to win a crown only followed by John Ming and Al Ming. It also marks this being a special year as Don's son Grant Widmer (29) will be competing at the Eidgenössisches Schwingfest in Basel in August, along with Andrew

Betschart (28) and Steven Widmer (30) from the Ripon Swinger Club and Connor Treat from Portland, Oregon. The four west coast Swiss wrestlers will compete thanks to Urs Gwerder who will be their coach and mentor while there. It is very special for Americans to compete on the large Swiss stage and stature and we are appreciative to them for allowing us to keep the tradition of Swiss Wrestling alive here in the US.

CHRIS SCHALLBERGER  
RIPONSWISSCLUB@AOL.COM



Don Widmer of Lathrop, CA, competed 50 years ago in 1972 in the Eidgenössisches Schwingfest and won an Eidgenössische Crown. Don was the first American to win a crown.



Andrew Betchart, Steven Widmer, Grant Widmer



## Northern California: Peninsula Swiss Club

With Covid rules slowly being removed, the Peninsula Swiss Club in the San Francisco Bay Area had our first in person event for Easter. We had our traditional eggs benedict served with a number of desserts supplied by our members. It was a great outdoor event and we even had a visit from the Easter bunny. Kids played in the nearby creek as well as kicked the soccer ball around. Members enjoyed connecting again for this wonderful event.

We also had a great hike/picnic/wine tasting event near Morgan Hill. This was well received and well attended. The member energy and excitement for our event was evident.

On towards summer we will offer our Semi-Annual BBQ and our 1st of August event. Our first junior member event will be happening towards the fall.

We continue to have a strong member support and have great help from our volunteers and kids. We are looking forward to a bright and positive year.



ERICH SONNBERGER, PRESIDENT  
[PRESIDENT@PENINSULASWISSCLUB.COM](mailto:PRESIDENT@PENINSULASWISSCLUB.COM)

## Florida: Swiss Club Miami

### Raclette dinner in Miami Beach

On March 10th, we hosted our first Raclette event since 2020. After several searches during the winter, the club finally found a restaurant that served Raclette in Miami. The event took place at Semilla, a restaurant in Miami Beach, where 60 guests (full house) gathered to enjoy a delicious raclette. The dinner also included plates of charcuterie, a Swiss chocolate mousse for dessert, and wine. The food was delicious and members and friends were happy to get together for a traditional Swiss meal! We concluded the evening with a free raffle where 5 lucky people won a Polo from the Swiss Club of Miami.



### Picnic at the Tropical Park in Miami on April 10th, 2022

It could not have been a better day - sunshine, perfect temperature, Bratwurst, Cervelat, Thomy mustard, Buerli from Switzerland, Nespresso, salad and lots of desserts. After 2 years of Covid everyone was happy to meet again. Over 120 people including kids attended and the members brought delicious salads and desserts. All other food, drinks and supplies were provided by the Swiss Club Miami. A big thank you goes to all Board Members: Astrid, Bea, Christian, Christina, Julia, Marco, Monique, Sofia, and Uwe for all the work before and after! All food and drinks had to be carried to the shelter, it felt like moving a household. Thank you also to our volunteers: Thomas the man at the BBQ, Roland and Claudio for decorating, and Diana (8 years old) - our check-in assistant! The line for the Bratwurst and Cervelat was long, but that gave everyone a chance to chat with different people during the wait.

The kids were hardly seen, except on the bouncing castle and the adults were enjoying the chats with their compatriots. In no time it was 3:00 pm when it all finished after almost 4 hours. People could order sausages and Buerli to take home and I still enjoy my 'Wurstsalat' after the picnic as a nice memory.



### Diccon Bewes

On May 26th we had the pleasure to welcome best-selling Swiss author Diccon Bewes at Books & Books in Coral Gables. About 55 people came to find out all about "Swissness" and what it means, both from an insider point of view and from the outside. Being British as well as Swiss his talk about Switzerland with a unique twist of British humor was an entertaining and informative evening for the entire audience. Bewes has written several books about Switzerland. His first book "Swiss Watching, inside the land of milk and money" was a best-seller and a Financial Times book of the year. Most of his books were on sale and could be signed by the author. An apéro was served and people stayed and mingled. A big thank you goes to the sponsor Villiger Cigars and the Consulate General of Switzerland in Atlanta who made this event happen. Bewes' book(s) which are fun to read or a great gift can be purchased at [https://shop.booksandbooks.com/search/site/diccon%20bewes?utm\\_source=search&utm\\_medium=booksandbooks.com](https://shop.booksandbooks.com/search/site/diccon%20bewes?utm_source=search&utm_medium=booksandbooks.com)



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## Florida: Swiss-American Club of Saratoga

Time is getting the best of us ... in the last issue, we were welcoming back our snowbirds and last Sunday it was already time to wish them a safe return back home!!!

Sarasota, and more specifically our beautiful Siesta Beach, have become a major attraction for vacationers and Spring Breakers, much to the dismay of the locals who have to contend with the increased traffic and restaurant reservations that must be made at least two weeks ahead.

We have been encouraged by the number of members participating in our events, the vaccines and boosters have certainly helped in giving everyone a sense of security. Slowly we have ventured out of our dens and into the sun and resumed socialization which is an important part of our life and our mental health. At the March 6th picnic, we were honored to host the Consul General of Switzerland in Atlanta, Mr. Peter Zimmerli and his wife Mrs. Jun Cui ... did the brats taste a little better that day? Maybe. The members were excited, it was like having a piece of Switzerland at our fingertips ... the questions as well as requests for pictures with Mr. Zimmerli were abundant.



On May 1st, it was time for our last picnic before the summer break. Again, attendance was great, the brats and salads tickled everyone's appetite. The Tombola, run by Mario and Nadège Bettini, is always a favorite ... who doesn't like to win, especially if the same person wins twice. The fact that members lingered a little longer, is always a great sign of a successful event.

Our club also welcomed new members: Sylvia, Paul and Oliver Day, Ruth Polnij, Sandra Roth, and Marlene Teachout-Wuest.

We wish everyone a great summer and invite you to browse our website for upcoming events. If you happen to be in our neighborhood, plan on joining us, we welcome everyone!

IMELDA EGG, VP COMMUNICATIONS  
[WWW.SWISSAMERICANCLUBSARASOTA.ORG](http://WWW.SWISSAMERICANCLUBSARASOTA.ORG)  
[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SWISS-AMERICAN-CLUB-OF-SARASOTA-111940088904568](https://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SWISS-AMERICAN-CLUB-OF-SARASOTA-111940088904568)



## Northern California: Aelpler Gruppe Swiss Club

Aelpler Gruppe started a series of group hikes in the greater San Francisco Bay area. Our recent hike was to the Vargas Plateau on Sunday, March 27th. The morning started out foggy and then the sun came through for a glorious view of the San Francisco Bay and surrounding hills.

The club will have hikes a few times each year and will rotate the hiking areas through the North Bay, East Bay, South Bay, and West Bay areas. The next hike will be in July. Hikes are usually between 4-6 miles with a picnic lunch afterwards at or near the trail head.

We encourage all members to join in the hike or to just come for the picnic and comradery.

ROSE SATARIANO, NEWSLETTER EDITOR  
[AELPLERGRUPPE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:AELPLERGRUPPE@GMAIL.COM)



Group hike in the Greater San Francisco Bay area to the Vargas Plateau with a glorious view of the San Francisco Bay and surrounding hills

## Minnesota: Twin Cities Swiss American Association

After several months of hibernation, the activities of the TCSAA changed from virtual to in-person events. It is nice to see the members coming out and enjoying some of the events the board has organized for our members and friends of Switzerland. One of them is the monthly Happy Hour at "The Local" in St. Louis Park. The decision to choose this location is that it is close to the geographical center point of our membership. On the 3rd Thursday of April, around 15 members and friends of Switzerland showed up, and we had a good time socializing. Remember to stop in at "The Local" on the 3rd Thursday of the month!

Two days later we were able to attend the soccer game between Minnesota United FC and Chicago Fire. One of the Swiss national players, Xherdan Shaqiri who plays for the Major League Soccer Club Chicago Fire, was playing at the Allianz Field. We were able to get a special group ticket and several TCSAA members

showed up to see him in action. At 31 years of age, he is still a great player. It was fun to see his dribbling skills. Lucky for our Minnesota fans, the Minnesota United team won the match 3-0.

One week later, we hosted one of our signature events, the Cheese Fondue. Originally planned for in February, and due to the recent spike in Covid cases, we decided to postpone the event until the end of April. We enjoyed the traditional meal at the German American Institute. We reached close to the maximum capacity. Under directions of Rene Vanoni, the kitchen crew prepared a great tasting Fondue. Thanks to many people working on this event, it turned out to be another success.

Looking into the future, in June we will gather for our Annual General Meeting. If you are interested, follow us on our website <http://www.tcsaa.us> or on Facebook (search for the Twin Cities Swiss American Association). We hope to have a great turnout.

One of the major milestone events will be in one year - the organization



will be celebrating its 50th year. Plans for this event are already in full gear!

MARKUS HOESLI  
VICE PRESIDENT TCSAA

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## Colorado: Swiss American Friendship Society (SAFS)

With the return to a mostly normal routine, the members of Swiss American Friendship Society (SAFS) in the Denver area bounced back strong.

### Winter wonderland outings

Eight members kicked off March with a scenic snowshoe hike near the Swiss owned Aspen Peak Cellars in Bailey, about 40 minutes east of Denver. After the hike, two more members joined for the delicious fondue and wine tasting hosted by the owners Julie and Marcel Flukiger.

Three weeks later, 16 members and friends gathered on a crisp early morning at the Denver Union Station to board the Winter Park Express. Together with two past presidents, Heidi Tornare and Will Currat, some members were more than eager to strap on their skis and snowboards for some brisk downhill fun. Others soaked in the intense Colorado sunshine and fresh mountain air. Everyone agreed that this event should become a new yearly tradition.

### 24th Annual Coupe Colorado Jass Tournament

On May 1, the 24th Annual Coupe Colorado Jass Tournament made a comeback after a two-year break. Players and spectators, so called Kibitzers, gathered for a day of Jass at the Front Range Brewing Company in Lafayette, west of Denver. SAFS was greeted by an invigorating breakfast thanks to Otis Craft Coffee and Bottom Rocks Bakery. The motivated Jassers played six rounds, only to stop for the catered lunch and brats. Tensions were high until the very last minute of this eventful day. Congratulations to Frederic Gerber for taking home the Coupe Colorado Jass Trophy (highest overall score of 3,849 points from 5 out of 6 rounds) and sharing the Rocky Mountain Jass Bowl with Bruno Gegenschatz (highest single round score of 893 points).

### Mother's Day Pickleball

Only a week later, right on time for Mother's Day, about 15 SAFS members gathered for an afternoon of Pickleball. Everyone had a great time before, during and after a few swift games.



Attendance of the various Stammtisch events was significantly improving during the second part of a mostly mild Colorado winter.



16 members and friends gathered on a crisp early morning at the Denver Union Station to board the Winter Park Express.



The 24th Annual Coupe Colorado Jass Tournament made a comeback after a two-year break.

The board members are busy working and meeting behind the scenes to prepare some exciting summer events. A June 13 event is in the works to welcome special visitors on the first non-stop Edelweiss flight of the season from Zürich. A Father's Day hike as well as the yearly August 1st celebration on July 31st are on the agenda as well. While the details are still being worked out, new and existing members will have several opportunities to meet up during the regular Stammtisch events, which take place on the first and third Wednesday of every month on the southern and northern end of the Denver metro area.

The SAFS is dedicated to fostering and advancing friendship and goodwill between the people of the state of Colorado and Switzerland. Our president Rene Sonderegger also happens to be the Honorary Consul of Switzerland and therefore fulfills this role in good old Swiss fashion with excellence. Rene can be reached at 303 378 4577 or [rene.sonderegger@renaissys.com](mailto:rene.sonderegger@renaissys.com). Visit our website at [www.safs.us](http://www.safs.us) to find out about our events and join our club if you live here in Colorado.

WRITTEN BY REGULA, GRENIER, A PROUD MEMBER OF THE SAFS

# MATT WIEDERKEHR (1929-2019) of Altus, Arkansas & Minnesota

November 21, 1783 was the first hot air balloon flight with men. The balloon flew over Paris, France for a distance of 5.5 miles in about 25 minutes. I knew you would be excited about that and what the heck does that have to do with our area? You are about to hear a story of an amazing family. MATT WIEDERKEHR (1929-2019) of Altus, Arkansas & Minnesota, along with his wife Bobbie, teen age daughters Denise and Donna were all involved in Hot Air Ballooning!

Matt was a member of the well-known Wiederkehr Winery Family of Altus, Arkansas. Wiederkehr Wine Cellars is one of the oldest and largest wineries in mid-America located on the southern slopes of the Ozark Mountains. The Wiederkehr family carries on a tradition of winemaking that begun in 1880 when Johann Andreas Wiederkehr and his family emigrated from Switzerland to America. [www.wiederkehrwines.com](http://www.wiederkehrwines.com)

Matt Wiederkehr saw the first balloon race held in the USA in 1962 during the St. Paul Winter Carnival and he was hooked for life. Family members say he was instantly fascinated by hot-air balloons, helping organize and participate in races for the carnival. He was the first person in Minnesota to purchase a hot-air balloon and was one of the first 10 licensed hot-air balloon pilots in the U.S. He eventually formed his own company that owned a dozen different balloons that he used to set world records and to advertise products. He sold companies on the idea of having floating billboards on balloons. He advertised for over 60 companies over the years worldwide. Coca Cola was the first big name to hire Matt sending him worldwide advertising for them. He became the first person in the USA to be issued a Commercial Balloon Pilots License.

As a pioneer of hot-air ballooning as a profession, Matt was also among the first to learn some of the biggest dangers, like the time he took a flight at midday and learned that invisible

zones of hot air can carry hot-air balloons into cumulus clouds. He came back down to earth after that violent trip with his balloon three-quarters deflated.

"He survived that", daughter Donna Wiederkehr said. "The first thing he did was to call the other balloonists and tell them. ... And then he created a tool that said, you don't want to fly when the sun is above X-degrees angle to the earth. Being a pioneer, you're learning. And he didn't just keep that for himself, he wanted to share that message."

I met Matt during the late 1960's or early 1970's and had learned a few things about his 22 record flights from his brother Leo. I didn't realize at that time that his teenage daughters were also flying solo in the balloons. Denise at age 16 set 12 world records in 1974, sister Donna at age 14, set 14 world records in 1975! Mama "Bobbie Wiederkehr" was busy with the ground crew keeping her family in the air.

Matt went on to help form the first balloon flight school approved by the Federal Aviation Administration. He was inducted into the U.S. Ballooning Hall of Fame in Iowa in 2012 and was the first person inducted into the Arkansas Ballooning Hall of Fame in September of 2021.

DUSTY HELBLING

<https://www.nationalballoonsociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Matt-Wiederkehr.pdf>



One of Matt's balloons featuring a copy of the art that was on the 1783 first ever balloon flight



Matt Wiederkehr in front of his many awards and trophies

**The Arkansas Governor signed a proclamation naming November 21, 2021, as "Matt Wiederkehr Day in Arkansas". This is the same day 238 years later of the first hot air balloon flight with men on board!**

- "Hot Air Balloonist"
- Matt Wiederkehr
- formed one of the first hot air balloon clubs
- created the first formal training curriculum for hot air balloons
- was the first person in the U.S. to receive a Commercial Hot Air Balloon Operator's License
- conducted the first safety seminar for hot air balloons
- operated the world's first pressurized hot airship
- established 22 World Records



Matt and Donna Wiederkehr at the Albuquerque, N.M. balloon fiesta.  
Matt was one of the only 13 balloons participating at the first balloon fiesta in 1972.

## SWISS REPRESENTATIONS:

Addresses of all Swiss Embassies and Consulates can be found on the following web-site:  
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