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THE JOLLY SWISS TOUR

(By Rosemary Ramsell)

WE ARE NEARING the end of our stay in New Zealand and for a finale we attend the long-awaited Swiss Picnic in Hamilton, which was held at the Walter Risi Piggeries in Ngaruawahia on Sunday, 6th February. This is one of the biggest Piggeries in New Zealand, with about 3500 pigs in all sizes and shapes. It also was perfect for the picnic with its spacious grounds and gardens, and the day was just perfect. There were several hundred members in attendance and among them I was happy to meet Mr Arthur Muller and his lovely wife and daughter from Auckland. Mr Muller is with the Swiss Consular Agency in Auckland and was a great help to me in making contact with the Swiss Clubs in New Zealand. The daughter, Verena, had just returned to Auckland after spending a couple of years in Switzerland. I also met Agnes Reichmuth Imhof, a cute little blonde who is ever so grateful to Rose Fuchslin of Fremont, who had been so kind to her and her family when she was a child in Muotathal, Switzerland. (She is the daughter of Mr and Mrs Augustin Imhof.)

Mr Walter Risi was anxious to meet with Margrit Aufdermaur because he had gone to school with her late husband and brother — Louis and Gottfried Wirsch — in Switzerland. There were 13 Schwingers and the first prize went to Sepp Boesch from Tauhei, Morrinsville, receiving a beautiful silver trophy — you wouldn't believe who was his "Kranz-meiteli" — yeap, me! I think he was more surprised than I was! There also was a bowling tournament in progress where a silver trophy is given the winner who can keep it but has to bring it back next year for the next winner — the winner's name is added each year (they were hoping one of our group would win and come again with a group next year to bring the trophy back — ha).

Furnishing a little Swiss music during the afternoon were: H. Oettli, playing the "handoergeli", and H. Odermatt the clarinet. Both are from Hamilton. Then the Yodel Club from Auckland, with Ernest Giger as the solo yodeler, sang several songs and yodels — they were just great! Also interesting were the three fellows who did the "Teller-Schwingen" (rolling a 5-franc coin in a large round bowl).

Many travelled long distances to attend the picnic, like the A. Kaelins, Joe Dettlings, D. Hiestands, Walkers and Schickers, who were among those coming from the Taranaki area. Mr and Mrs Risi, on whose ranch the picnic took place, are known for their gracious hospitality and donating much time and effort in support of the Swiss Club there. On behalf of the Jolly Swiss Group (22 of which were still there to attend) I thank the Hamilton Swiss Club, their president Mr John Villiger and the Walter Risis for extending such a friendly welcome to our group. We all hope to

be able to do the same for you when you come to California. (I hear they are seriously thinking of organising a group to come over here — we do hope so). We finished up the evening with a party that started in Italo Orsetti's room, moved to the Imhof's and when that ran dry, we woke up the Clem Mullers — and we had our own little dance with the help of our handy cassette player and Swiss tapes. Who has more fun? We ssure did!!!

Now we are busy getting packed for our return trip home. While waiting for our transportation to pick us up, the fellows were busy playing Jass and Al Imhof sat on Louie Marchy's cigar and didn't feel a thing until there was a hole clear through his pants and underhose, ha ha! And it's still a jolly Swiss group. A short flight takes us to Auckland and from there we are on our way to Tahiti. Tahiti was beautiful and the 85-mile tour around the Island is well worth it because it is green and colourful, with an abundance of flowers all the way round. The 20 remaining Jolly Swiss were joined at the Tahiti Airport by Frank and Mary Gabriel and 22 flew home together, leaving only Katherine Richter, who remained in New Zealand with the A. Kaelins of Hawera, to come home later.

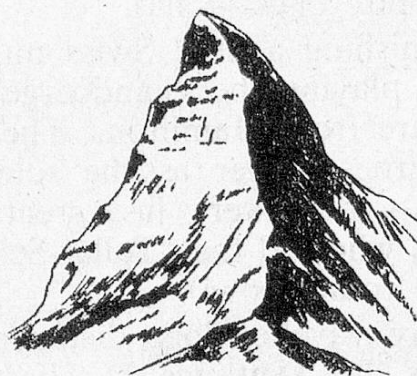
The jolly tired group was met at San Francisco by many friends and relatives and a happy ending to one of those "once in a lifetime" trips where everything and everyone was wonderful. I hope that each and every one enjoyed the trip as much as I did.

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