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FROM THE PRESIDENT

I was invited to join the travelling party that arrived from Switzerland on the occasion of 700 years Switzerland. The purposes were to celebrate with all the Swiss clubs and also to present to our fellow New Zealanders an insight how the direct democracy system works in Switzerland, to present a segment of our culture and to entertain with traditional music. The whole programme was organised and executed by the Swiss Embassy under the direction of our Ambassador, Dr Michael von Schenck with the assistance of the Consul Mr Peter Graf and the entire staff of the Embassy. On behalf of the Swiss Society I offered my services to help with the running of the programme and during the trip to all our main centres. I took daily notes of all the happenings and would like to share the experiences with all our members. It is not meant to be a polished travel report but only a diary scribbled down in between short pauses in our busy schedule. So here we go:

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2

The Ambassador, Mr Graf and myself went to the airport to greet the first group (we call them group A) the Alder Family from Appenzell. They came to play traditional music from Appenzell. They consisted of Hansueli Alder, the leader and playing the violin, Ueli Alder the father, playing the bass, Erwin Alder playing the accordion, Jakob Freund playing the hackbrett and the solo-yodler Hanspose Walte. Of course all are accomplished yodelers as well as playing instruments. The weather was not very kind and the plane was a bit late. However, we were pleased to see them landing on the marginal airport. We transferred them to their quarters at Lower Hutt at the Ambassadorial Residence. Mrs von Schenck had a hot vegetable soup ready to warm them up and then they had a rest to get over the jetlag.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3

The 'Huddelwetter' is still here so we took our guests to the Museum where since October 25 the Albert Manser Exhibition is on display. Twenty-seven paintings in all, depicting traditional scenes from Appenzell. Albert Manser also is well-known all over Switzerland, having had exhibitions there and published books of his paintings and painted cards for UNICEF. Lots of people were looking at them as it was Sunday with lousy weather and therefore most suitable to spend time in the Museum. Then we showed them the view of Wellington from Mount Victoria, a drive around the Bays, watching the sailboard riders in the rough sea skimming the waves. Wellington is very nice even in bad weather as it is a spectacular sight with the sea braking on the rocky shores. Then we inspected my wine cellar in my home and had a happy hour.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4

The Ambassador, Mr Graf, Roland Schuetz, the Alders and myself went to the little theatre in Lower Hutt to inspect the hall and facilities for the concert on Thursday night with the Wellington Swiss Club. The musicians were happy with the acoustics and everything else seemed okay.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

The lousy weather is persistent and Wellington airport is shrouded in low clouds. The Ambassador, Mr Graf and myself waited at the airport for the plane to arrive from Melbourne at 15.45. However at the last moment the pilot diverted to Auckland. Albert Manser was to be the guest of honour at the reception given by the Ambassador and a private viewing of the exhibition. The reception went ahead anyway with over 100 people present and the Alder Family playing music from Appenzell to complement the paintings. At 19.00 we went back to the airport and the plane landed. Our guests duly arrived. We call them now group B consisting of: Mrs Erica Koller, wife of

the Federal Minister of Justice. Mr Bruno Weishaupt the incoming President of the Cantonal Parliament of Basel Land and his wife, Mr Franz Zumthor Municipal Administrator and his wife. And Mr Albert Manser the Painting Artist and his wife. This group will be acting as a panel to represent Switzerland at all three levels. Our Ambassadoir as Federal Representative, Bruno Weishaupt as Cantonal Representative and Franz Zumthor as Municipal Representative. Albert Manser and the Alder Quintet as the Cultural Representatives. So instead of the Museum we went straight home to the residence for a home-style family dinner and getting to know each other.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Hurray! It is one of those beautiful Wellington days with clear blue sky and the sun shining brightly. Just before noon Representatives from the Crown, Parliament, His Worship the Mayor, Sir James Belich, and members of the Diplomatic Corps gathered at the Begonia House in the Botanic Gardens. After some refreshments our Ambassador addressed the gathering and Don McKinnon the Deputy Prime Minister replied on behalf of the Government and wished Switzerland well for another 700 years. The Alder Quintet added the welcome musical pleasures. Then in procession the well over 100 people wandered up the hill where the tree planting ceremony will be taking place. It was a well chosen area. The first tree was planted by the Representative of the Queen, the second by Mr McKinnon on behalf of the New Zealand Government, His Worship the Mayor planted the third on behalf of the city of Wellington, then Erica Koller on behalf of the people in Switzerland the fourth. Our Ambassador planted the fifth on behalf of the Swiss Government, mine was the sixth on behalf of the Swiss Society and Roland Schuetz and his daughter planted the seventh tree on behalf of the Wellington Swiss Club and the youth of New Zealand. During the planting Hansueli Alder played the Alphorn, followed by a Yodel, Talerschwinge and Fahnenschwinge by Ueli Alder. A commemorative plaque was unveiled by Erica Koller and it can be seen halfway between the main entrance to the Gardens and the Rosegarden. I shall watch their progress! The afternoon we spent to view the Manser Exhibition which our visitors missed the day before and then some sightseeing of the high spots of Wellington.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Our visitors had a good look around Wellington. At 17.00 the first of many panel discussions started at the Shell Theatrette. The Alder Quintet set a bright mood with a few melodies and Yodels. Then the serious business of explaining how direct democracy in Switzerland works was admirably explained by our Ambassador with the assistance of the panel. The theatrette was full to capacity, arranged by the Institute of International Affairs. Questions followed thick and fast about referendums, initiatives, proportional representation etc. Then we proceeded to Lower Hutt where the first concert took place, hosted by the Wellington Swiss Club. The Alder Quintet presented a varied programme non-stop for 45 minutes. At the interval we sold 600 Tombola tickets in a short time. Proceeds of these Tombolas will start a fund to foster Swiss/New Zealand relationships. The official part started after the interval with my greetings from the Swiss Society and then our Ambassador addressed the audience, followed by Erica Koller bringing greetings from home spoken in perfect English. Bruno Weishaupt brought greetings in Baslerdialekt from the cantons. Then followed the second part of the Alder Quintet with Alphorn and 'Schalleschuttle' and some jokes from Jakob Freund. The evening ended with satisfied people going home with lots of Swiss Chocolates in their hands as every second Tombola ticket did at least bring one prize.