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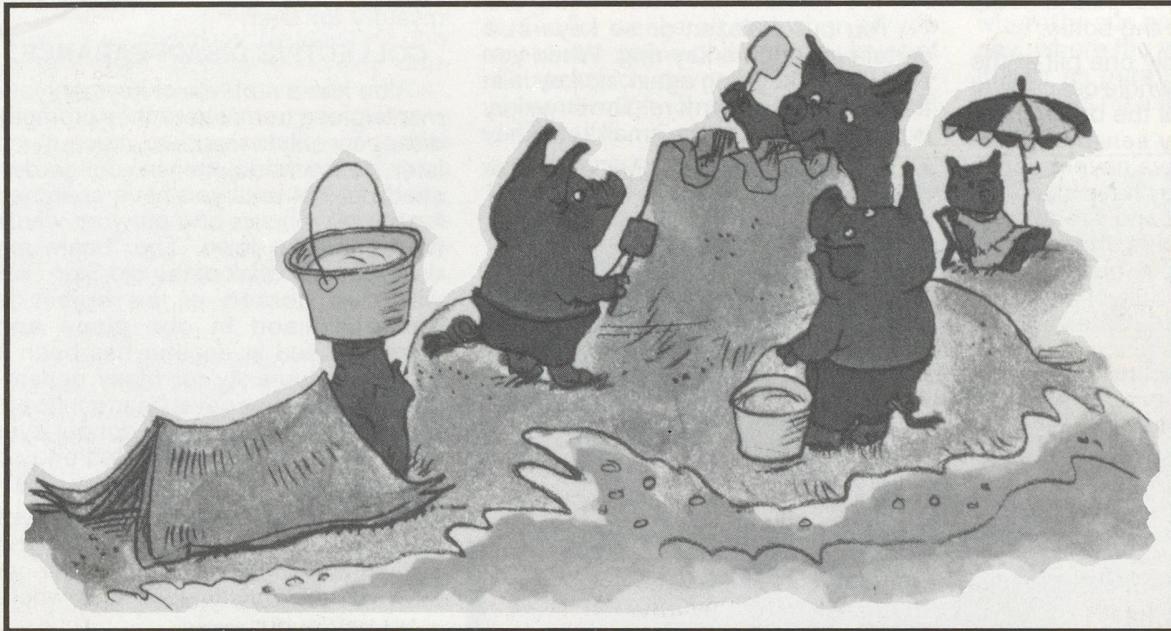
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FIREWALL



EDITORIAL

Who ever said that objects are lifeless and totally devoid of intelligence? Nothing could be further from the truth. Objects have a brain and what is more, they have, without exception, a nasty streak in them. You do not believe me? So tell me then: have you ever seen an object trying to be nice to you, to help you and assist you? No, never. On the contrary, objects will do their darnest to be difficult, obstructive, annoying and down right uncooperative towards humans.

If you don't believe me, tell me why paper will burn anywhere else except in the fireplace, why shopping trolleys always try to go the wrong way, why the rain comes always after you watered the garden, why the rubbish bag, propped up by the wall, never falls against the wall but always away from it so that it can conveniently spill all its contents, why the shower mixer goes

from ice cold to boiling hot water in a space of a millimetre on a scale of almost 360 degrees, why smoke from your barbecue always gets into your eyes and keeps following you around as you try to escape it, why traffic lights always turn red when you are in a hurry but stay green when you have plenty of time, why the wind always blows your hair into your face and never away from it. The list could go on for ever.

Still not convinced that objects have an evil mind? Here are a few more examples.

What could be more innocent than a tiny pebble on the road? Nothing except until it sees you coming along. It does not matter how tight your shoes are, this little pebble will jump up at the right moment and wriggle itself into your shoe. Once inside, it will not be satisfied to sit there quietly in a corner: no, it will lodge itself right there where it hurts you most and any shaking on your part will not dislodge it from its

craftily selected spot. A further nasty twist is that no two pebbles attack you at the same time. No, the second pebble cleverly waits for you down the road just a few calculated paces away from the spot where you stop to get rid of the first one. Coincidence? Don't you believe it. It was all carefully planned to give you maximum annoyance.

Now let's take an ordinary looking metal-type nut. Its first trick is to place itself askew on its bolt and if by mistake you did not notice this and tried to screw it on, it will jam itself so tight that you will need hammer and tongs and a super-human effort to yank it off its bolt again.

But its most diabolical trick is to disappear into the bowels of your car engine just as you try to fix it on its bolt. Instead of falling through the engine and land on the ground underneath your car, it finds a way to lodge itself somewhere in between engine parts, out of sight in a place totally inaccessible to ordinary humans. Short of turn-

ing your car upside down and shaking it, there is no way in the world to dislodge that nut. A computer would have taken hours to work out the complicated trajectory for the nut to get there, but the nut found the spot without hesitation or assistance from anyone. Undoubtedly the nut must have a very clever but nasty brain to achieve this. Come to think of it, in the light of this, to call someone a "nut" could actually well be a real compliment!!

And what about pills. They too have several vile tricks up their sleeve. It starts with getting them out of the bottle. As they can obviously read what is written on the bottle, they know exactly how many pills you need at a time and they will spare no effort to counteract your attempts to get the right number of pills out of the bottle. If you need two or more pills, only one pill will roll out and all the others will jam inside the bottle forming a bottleneck at the neck of the bottle. No shaking in the world will dislodge them anymore. Your only solution is then to stab your pills to death by poking a knife into the bottle.

But if you need only one pill at the time, nothing stops a whole cascade of pills from rolling out of the bottle. Now pills have an uncanny sense of direction. Although they have never been to your home before, they have sized up, in the fraction of a second it took them to emerge from the bottle, the layout of your home. Any stupid object would have rolled into the middle of the room, but your wily pills immediately picked the most inaccessible place available: in the lounge they would roll under-

neath the sideboard or the sofa and finish up, out of sight, in the gap between your carpet and the wall; in the kitchen, the only logical place for a pill worth its name to roll under is of course the fridge where it may well give your cockroaches something to gnaw on for a few days.

Final remark: it does not matter how thin a pill is, it will never fall on its side. It always rolls and, for such a small object, the speed at which it rolls and its incredible sense of direction clearly indicate that it must possess a brain far superior and more devious than our own.

And finally let us look at the keys. Keys are undoubtedly the Houdini's of the gadget world. They possess a supernatural brain that surpasses in cunningness the brains of any past, present and future human geniuses. No illusionist, magician or sorcerer could ever come close to match their tricks of which we will only mention a few.

PERMUTATION.

You put a dozen or so keys in a certain order on a key-ring. When you pick up the key-ring again, no key is in the same place anymore. The large key is no longer next to the small key. They all have changed their positions. How did they do it, you will never know.

INDIVIDUAL DISAPPEARANCE.

You look for one specific key on your key-ring. Mysteriously it has disappeared. You finger over other key on the ring a dozen times over, but the very key you want is not there. And just

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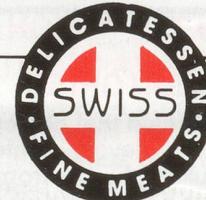
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as you are ready to blow your top, suddenly the key you are looking for reappears, right underneath your thumb as if it had been there all the time. Where did the key go and how did it get back onto the key-ring will remain a mystery for ever.

COLLECTIVE DISAPPEARANCE.

You leave a bunch of keys on your mantelpiece from where they promptly disappear only to reappear, much, much later, on the workbench in your garden shed but not until you have searched for them for hours and put your whole house upside down. The "beam me down, Scotty" trick of the old Star Trek where a person or an object is dematerialised in one place and rematerialised in another has been a dream of humanity for many generations but so far has never been achieved. But our clever keys have done it ever since keys had been invented and no one has yet found out how they do it.

Car keys have added another twist to this unique feat. They have a homing instinct built in them. You put your car keys on your night table from where



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they disappear as a matter of course. You search the whole house for them (and the garden shed this time too) only to find them eventually happily dangling from the dashboard of your car. How they managed to get into your locked car and insert themselves into the ignition lock will probably remain an enigma for ever. As an added oddity, car-keys can perform this trick far more often with highly intelligent but absent-minded professors than with ordinary, down-to-earth people and yet no one can explain why.

If after all this you still persist in thinking that objects have no brains and no nasty streak in them, you must be living in a real dream-world of your own.

The purpose of the objects' insidious intelligence is simply there to test our brains, to see how far they can push us before we blow our top, to prove to us how superior they are to us and how badly we compare to them. Do not be surprised if you feel depressed after reading this Editorial, I felt the same after I wrote it...

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

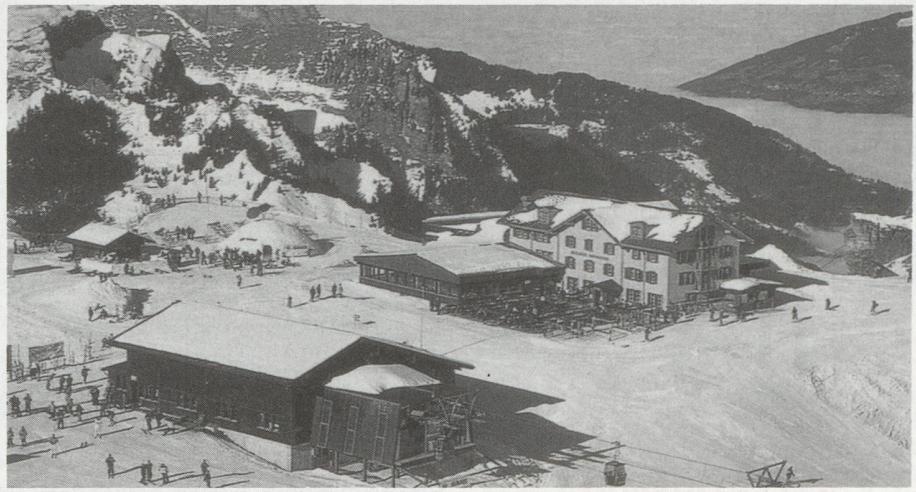
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ANOTHER VICTIM OF MODERN TIMES

The "Swiss American Review", a weekly magazine published in the USA for the benefit of all Swiss living in North America, has gone under.

For years the magazine had been financially supported by Otto Rüesch, a Zurich born American banker who lives in Washington. The weekly "Swiss

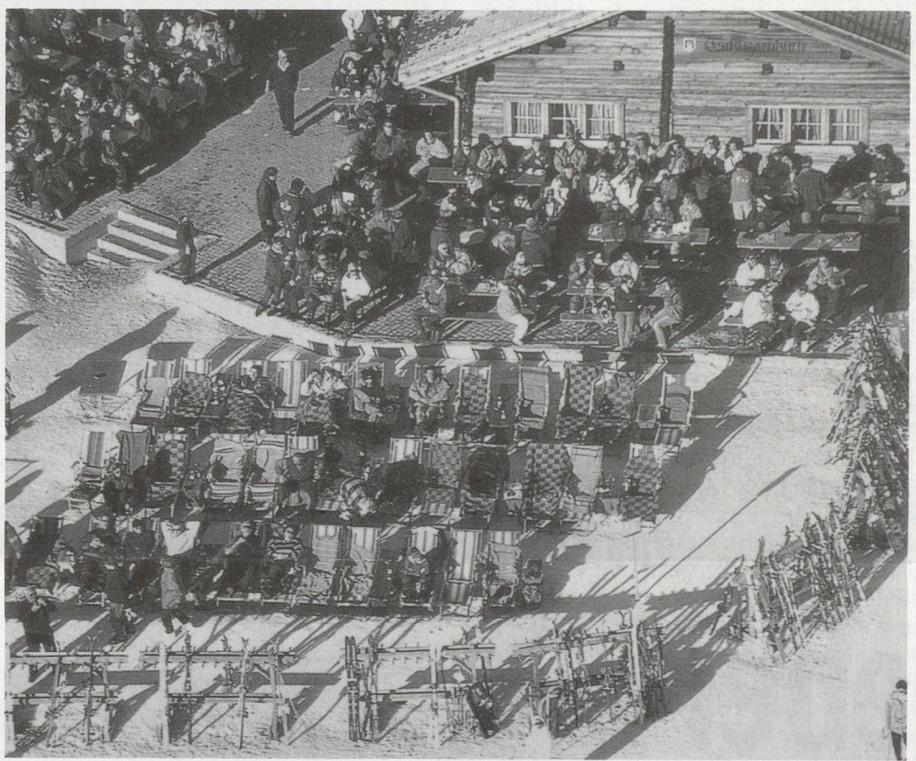
HIGH ABOVE THE EVER LASTING FOG



View of the Männlichen, high above Wengen. In the background, the uniform grey cloud covering the Lake of Thun and for that matter the whole of the Swiss plateau.

All of you who lived in Switzerland and had to spend your winters down on the "flat land" will remember the horrible grey winter weather which seemed to last for weeks on end when all you could see was a uniform grey layer of clouds which never let any real sunshine through. It certainly was most depressing.

But if you were lucky to be able to get away into the mountains, somewhere above 1200-1500m, you found yourself in a completely different world where the sun never stopped shining all day, where the weather was clear and the air as pure as crystal. This winter again was no exception as the pictures show.



A view of the Tschuggenhuette above Arosa. The thrifty Swiss shun the deck chairs because you have to pay for them, so most visitors use the terraces where seating is free.

American Review" had a circulation of some 3500 copies. It was written up and produced by Richard Anderegg, a 76 year old professional journalist who selected news items from Switzerland, translated them into English and published them in the Review (very much the same as your Editor does for the Helvetia).

Over the years, Rüesch invested over 250,000 USD into his venture and until the last minute, he still hoped to

get more large Swiss firms to support him in his effort by advertising in his magazine. Unfortunately, most Swiss firms did not come to his rescue and so last December, Rüesch decided to close his magazine down for good.

Rüesch claimed that, in this modern world, the time for ethnic magazines was over. (Will this also be the fate of your Helvetia magazine in the years to come? We sincerely hope not).