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Editorial

What's in a name....?

Walking through a cemetery in central Switzerland some years ago I came upon some beautifully carved 'head-stone-monuments', a few with short verses from the Bible inscribed in bold letters. One of them simply read "*I have called you by name; you are mine..*"

Would you agree, that for Swiss/Kiwis like most of us, with relatives 'back home' in Switzerland it used to be quite a challenge to find a suitable name for the newly born child in our English speaking country of adoption? - Choosing a name from past family-history or from the Bible was one way to make the choice

acceptable to family members at 'both ends of the world'.

- Today our people in 'the old country' have long learned to accept some very exotic names amongst family and relations. - I well remember the 'lucky compromise' my Wife and I decided on when we picked the name **Heidi** for our third daughter some thirty years ago. How grateful we felt towards the famous Swiss novelist Johanna Spyri for the creation of the fictional character Heidi in her books, a century ago, since almost everybody in New Zealand knew about the story of the orphaned Heidi living high up in the mountains of Switzerland with her grumpy but kindhearted old Grandfather 'Almöhli'.

- With the 'Heidi-story' well known

around the world for so long, we might find it odd, that despite it's world wide fame, and the films it has inspired, it has failed to become a tourist attraction. But that's about to change. (according to a recent documentary from Swiss Radio International). A number of tourist organisations from the eastern Cantons Graubünden and St. Gallen have for the first time joined forces to promote '**Heidiland**' as a tourist destination.

- One of the attractions of the Heidiland-holiday is the opportunity to experience life as it might have been lived by the local 19th century orphan girl, and what better way than to travel through the area of Maienfeld (in a horse drawn carriage), where Heidi lived with her Grandfather. The destination of course is Heidi's house in Maienfeld, the village or at least her winter-residence. This is as good a place as any to begin the tour of the region that inspired Johanna Spyri to begin her novel there. Here the children can feed the resident goats. A lot of Japanese tourists have already come as they seem to know the story just about better than the Swiss themselves. Watching them enjoying themselves in the environment of their imagination, it appears that they think they are in heaven. It is claimed that 'Heidi' is the second most read book after the bible, so the Graubünden and St. Gallen tourist offices are hoping that there is a massive band of disciples 'out-there' desperate to make a 'pilgrimage' to this particular 'temple'.

- Leading on from Maienfeld we cross the river Rhine to another place mentioned in the novel, the famous spa resort of Bad Ragaz where Heidi's wheel-chair-bound friend Clara came to be cured. And people still come to this town in the hope that the thermal waters will help them too. The baths are open to the public. The source of the healing waters is a place called Pfäfers, some 5 km away and to reach it we have to travel along the breathtaking and at times precarious Tamina gorge. This gorge is (by the way) on the Federal Government's list of important natural sights. Now that the waters have been diverted to Bad Ragaz, nobody comes to be cured at Pfäfers any more. With more people coming to the region for the 'Heidi-experience', many will be drawn to the region to witness the natural wonder. - From Bad Ragaz the tourist can take a cable car trip up the mountain to the

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