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60 years of Marriage Celebration for Walter and Agnes Steiner

St. Antony's Cath. Church, Huntly

A condensed revue of the lives of Agnes & Walter;
How wonderful to celebrate such a remarkable occasion in a world where the breakdown of marriage is all too prevalent. - And what a justifiably proud day it was on **June 17, 2000** when approx. 300 people (members of the Steiner family, relatives, fellow Swiss-Kiwis, friends and acquaintances) gathered at the Catholic Church in Huntly, (Waikato) for the celebratory Mass presided over by the parish Priest, Father Jones. - Like a red ribbon the theme of "love for one-another" wound its way through the celebration and the very carefully chosen readings from the Bible reflected on enduring Love with promises kept, sacrifices made, forgiveness granted and received.

Walter and Agnes have experienced 60 years of responsible married life and with their Swiss connection well known and recognised here in the Waikato, it is appropriate (and they kindly allow us) to share some of the family's history with you, the readers of Helvetia;

Starting at the beginning, some of us can remember Walter's Parents, Anton Steiner & Elisa née Betschart as keen and talented members of the Hamilton Swiss Club in the 50's.

Anton and Elisa came to New Zealand from Central Switzerland, were married in Kaponga in 1912 and were unable to return to Switzerland (as originally planned) due to the outbreak of World war one. During the following years of depression they lost all assets but recovered by typical Swiss determination, finally farming near Putaruru on 108 acres of land for which they paid 2800 pounds and were able to milk 40 cows in all!

- Walter was born into the Anton/Elisa family in 1917 as child 'number 4'. His Brother Tony and Sisters Eliza, Ettie, Freda, Hilda and Lena are all alive today, however Walter is the only one remaining with a living partner.

Walter's schooling (finishing at 14) was at Inglewood, Kaponga, Kapuni, Tahuna (Waikato) Ngahape and Otorohanga.

All the Anton/Elisa family spoke Swiss at home and Walter is no exception.

Walter, as a shy but handsome 19-year old was introduced to Agnes Missen, a city girl of English and French descent. After a courtship by correspondence and a 2-year engagement they were married in 1940 at 'All Souls Church' Devonport, 9 am. on a Wednesday!

- Agnes, Walter's Wife of 60 years hails from a family of 8 children, 2 boys and 6 girls. - Even today Walter maintains that his Agnes was the 'pick of the bunch'! Agnes and Walter's wedding in the war-year of 1940 was

by necessity a modest affair and with petrol rationing even the honeymoon was in doubt. However one of Walter's brothers-in-law came to the rescue sacrificing his own monthly petrol allocation.

- Walter and Agnes made their way through the first 20 years of married life as farm employees on various farms in the Waikato. During this time they were blessed with 7 children. By 1964 Walter and Agnes managed to buy their first farm at Taupiri and during the following years the family increased by another 3 children to bring the total to ten, 7 sons and 3 daughters. Then followed 12 years of consolidated family and farming life on a new farm at Huntly from where they retired to Huntly town in 1983.

- Talking to some 'Steiner-relatives' and friends at the after-Mass-luncheon in the War Memorial Hall, it became obvious that Agnes and Walter had actually not as yet retired. It is well known that they are still very active, helping wherever help is needed in family, church community and neighborhood. - Agnes's ability as chef and mistress of her kitchen is legendary and her jams, pickles and apple-tarts are well known to all her family and friends.

- And what is the secret of 60 years of happy marriage, they have been asked;

- Here are some answers given by some of the immediate family of 10 children, 47 grand-children and 14 great-grand children:

- * Their home is always open and welcoming to all...
- * A wonderful example of Christian faith...
- * Always loving and supportive, always there when needed, (well, most of the time!)
- * They have given us the gift of life and faith..
- * They have always coped remarkably well with changes in their lives....
- * Related so well with young people...
- * Provided great up-bringing and passed on the Swiss heritage...
- * Many a pack of Swiss cards has been totally worn-out in the company of family, in-laws, grand children and friends...
- * An inspirational couple, someone we can all look up-to and learn from.....
- * Absolutely awesome couple

* Agnes doesn't drive, meaning that she and Walter had to go together wherever they went and although Agnes isn't in the 'drivers seat', Walter would be lost without his co-pilot...

- Walter and Agnes have always been active in Swiss circles. Walter's proud interest in his Swiss heritage has always been fully supported by Agnes. They both love Swiss traditions like music, Swiss food and Jassen. - They have both been willing helpers for many years in general and as members of the committee of the Hamilton Swiss Club.

On behalf of the Waikato Swiss Community and on behalf of the Swiss Society of New Zealand we extend sincere Congratulations to Walter and Agnes on this great achievement of 60 years togetherness. May God bless you and keep you in good health in years to come!

Editor