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Editorial..

The "number 8-wire solution"...

"Did you go through the war, Grossvati?" was the question by one of my teenage grand daughters the other day! - My reply turned (unintentionally) into a somewhat 'longwinded' answer and it started stirring up many disturbing memories in my mind.

A simple 'yes' would have meant taking the easy way out, and a simple 'no' would have been a denial of sorts, and since I have been looking forward to the time of having meaningful discussions with teenage grand children, I lost myself unwittingly in a longwinded explanation. Soon after that I read a short article in a Swiss magazine about a Swiss immigrant turning discarded timber into new furniture. That article to-

gether with the answer given my grand daughter resulted in the 'editorial headline' of this months'. - Allow me to take you back some 60 years of recent times and would you come with me to the place of my birth in the upper Toggenburg of Switzerland as we write the year 1942.

Europe was in great turmoil as the second world war engulfed nations and peoples.

As a seven year old growing up in a mountain farming family of five children with parents and grand parent I did not understand war, comparing it to some childish games we played as 'warlords' and 'foot soldiers' in the forest or on sloping hills of the small plots of land that constituted the mountain farming area of our region.

How happy we children were in moments of relaxation as talks of daily

events of war affecting our home country were pushed aside. But fear and hunger gradually eroded such happiness as I well remember. The fear of Switzerland being 'drawn into the war' was written on the faces of the adult population. Soldiers (including our Dad) long since drafted into defence duties, everywhere. Villages turned upside down for military purposes; sweating, heaving horses pulling gun carriages uphill, sliding and falling over themselves coming downhill together with the shouting of commands by the military. Disturbing images for a seven year old boy.

Rationing of all food except some basics like potatoes became the order of the day. Fresh bread (dark-brown mixed with potatoes to 'make it go further') had to be 'aged' for 24 hours by the bakery in order to better satisfy the hungry population. Every hen in our small 'chicken-run' had to be counted and numbers registered by the rationing authorities as was the case with cows, pigs and all 'profit bearing animals', so that the allocation of food-coupons could be adjusted downwards taking regard of 'home produce'.

Never to be forgotten the distinctive smell of turnips (cooked as soup or vegetable dish) in our house as well as in most others in Toggenburg, the region of the 'poor farmer' as it was always known due to the harsh climatic conditions and the mini-plots of land families had to live on. In our case it was 3.5 hectares allowing some 3.5 head of dairy-cows to be kept with young stock in similar numbers. We considered ourselves fortunate, our parents being able to rent another two hectares of adjacent land off a neighbour.

It was not only the shortage of rationing allocations but the general poverty that drove people to near despair in those days in our region. Vegetables were scarce, growing on tiny garden plots in low fertility soils, and a harsh climate. The shortage of bread was the main worry in our family of growing children. I well remember each of us guarding a shoe box containing a daily allowance of some 300 grams of bread allocated for the day by our mother in the morning, knowing it had to last for 24 hours! Hunger and worry about the progress of the war around us were constant companions. 'May devotions' in our church,

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