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(quite common in those days), which were supposed to be uplifting occasions) turned into prayer vigils petitioning 'St. Niklaus von Flüe', Switzerland's patron-saint, to save the country from the fate of total war as our neighbouring countries had to experience.

Living became a daily struggle for everyone and especially for families with fathers in military service and mothers managing farming (manual work with primitive means) with half-grown sons dividing all spare time between school and duties, often on an empty stomach. No wonder the 'old scourge of tuberculosis' reared its ugly head again among some of us school children, and I well remember two of my school friends confessing to me that they would soon receive some 'support from the authorities' due to the fact that they had been diagnosed as malnourished beyond the ordinary.... (It was well known that their whole family lived mainly on stray cats and dogs, a delicacy for the 'poor of the poorest').

But now going back to the headline of this article I must admit that, with all these hardships befalling us, there was the versatility of the human inventiveness that I remember well, even as a seven year old. There was my Mother's ability to turn old clothes into 'new' children's clothing, Dad repaired shoes to stretch their life-span as did most other Dads of the day. Mother made a name for herself as self-taught men's barber and applied her services for boys and men in our region, often for a heartfelt thank you only, or a few meager cents of pay. (I well remember the frightened look on the faces of boys from our neighborhood as they sat themselves down on the 'barber's-stool' in our kitchen, expecting to suffer bravely the consequences of the coming haircut with hand clippers.)

Mother became a well known expert at killing and dressing chicken for everyone lucky enough to be able to spare such a livestock-commodity, or for anyone suspecting that one of the treasured hens showed signs of illness....! People in rural areas spoke softly when gossiping about the latest rumor that a 'black pig' (one that missed the strict counting for the food rationing authorities!) had been dispatched during the darkness of the night, and that some

such meat might be available on the 'black market'.

Yes, there were dark days, not only dark nights (due to obligatory 'black-outs') during those times, some 60 years ago in Switzerland.

But the inventiveness of people was a triumph in adversity showing itself in various ways of daily life.

This very human ability came to the fore not only in Switzerland but in many countries affected by the war and in New Zealand, our country of adoption, it has survived to this day, known as the 'number eight-wire solution' in farming and industry alike. Let's hope we never lose it!

### President's Message

A well known and respected Swiss charitable organisation is currently in the process of extending its reach to include Swiss Abroad. The *Glückskette* or 'Chain of Fortune' is currently collecting as many e-mail addresses as possible, along with a brief personal message in the theme of "how my life is here" about living abroad (max. three short sentences, any language), by 20th April.

The charity, which uses various media systems to raise funds, was established in 1946 by employees of a radio station, and has become one of the most well known in Switzerland. It offers assistance to disaster victims in Switzerland and abroad, and is currently supporting 40,000 children, both in Switzerland as well as (mainly) in the Third World, and annually provides aid to around 2500 people and families in financial difficulty. And now the *Glückskette* Switzerland is hoping to extend its reach to the 10% of citizens currently living abroad, and all Swiss Abroad are being asked to forward their e-mail addresses, together with brief personal details to:

<http://www.glueckskette.ch>.

In return, you will be directly notified by e-mail about all future fundraising activities

To publicise this *Glückskette* 'launch', a function will be held at the 'Place of the Swiss Abroad' in Brunnen on 20 April, where a selection of the messages received will be projected onto a large screen for everyone to see.

(Advising your e-mail address

places you under no obligation, and addresses or information will not be passed on to a third party.)

### "Five Minutes for the Fifth Switzerland"

And in connection with the *Glückskette* campaign, a further event could also bring some of us a nice surprise!

On the 20th April (Saturday) you could be receiving a phone call from a loved one in Switzerland. Under the heading "Five Minutes for the Fifth Switzerland" Swisscom is enabling a free phone call, of up to five minutes duration, from each of its 'Fixnet' (fixed telephone line) connections to an overseas number. Also taking part in this promotion are the Swiss Abroad Association, the Foreign Affairs Department, swissinfo/SRI, and the Gemeinde (borough) of Brunnen.

With over 580,000 Swiss nationals living abroad, phone lines will certainly be ringing hot around the world!

So make sure you're near your phones on the day, and I hope many will receive a brief 'catch-up' call from family and friends from Switzerland.

Best Regards,

Beatrice



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