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This and That columnist - Lisette Benkert

My husband Ruedi and I came to New Zealand in March 1965. Ruedi is from Aarberg (canton Bern) and I am from Chavornay (canton Vaud). We both were brought up on farms. My brother took over my parents' farm and Ruedi's parents were managing a farm belonging to the sugar factory. As our ambition was to own our farm, we decided to emigrate to New Zealand. We were determined to stay for at least two years (whether we liked it or not!!!), but soon realised that the opportunity to farm your own land was here. We arrived at Jack Schwab's property on Climie Road, Stratford on a Sunday. Jack was at the Ted Napflin Shoot (a trophy competed for annually by Taranaki Swiss



Lisette Benkert

Club members) in Kaponga. Hans Wuthrich was waiting to welcome us at Jack's house. When Jack arrived home, we had a fair idea how Swiss people could socialise in New Zealand!

On the following Wednesday our boxes (no containers in those days) arrived by train and we then started working for a Kiwi farmer on Brookes Road in Stratford. We lived in a lovely house, newly painted and wallpapered, and our boss and his parents were wonderful to us. Mrs Lehmann would take me to town with her once a week, and with the dictionary on my lap we would try to have a conversation!!! By August Marianne was born ... I was so glad to have nurse Therese Suter in the home to help me when I didn't understand the English language!!? Not that I could speak Swiss-German any better!!! At times, it was very difficult when the only person I could have a discussion with was my husband!! I There was no-one around who could speak French!!! 'If you can't beat them, join them' was my philosophy, so I slowly picked up Schwytserdutsch and English. I will never forget how friendly New Zealand people were with us and especially the generation of Swiss people a little older than us, bringing vegetables from their gardens and meat from their freezers. Some of them visited me in the maternity, and I had probably only met them a couple of times at the socials held at the Kapuni Hall.

We have both been involved with the Taranaki Swiss Club over the years and are keen to give our time to the Swiss Society in helping with the Helvetia issues for the next five years. I will be compiling the "This and That Corner", and would welcome any suggestions that you may have.

Amicalement, Lisette.

New Life:

Silvia Schuler:

My name is Silvia Schuler and I am taking over as secretary of the Helvetia magazine from Ruth Waldvogel. I came to New Zealand in 1996 with my husband Franz, who is also from Switzerland. We are both from Canton Schwyz. Franz is from Schubelbach and I am from Steinen. We are dairy farmers and enjoying the country life in Taranaki. This year both Franz and I are committee members for the Taranaki Swiss Club and I also really like keeping my Swiss culture and traditions.



While Silvia Schuler may not have been in New Zealand very long, she has become an active member of the Taranaki Swiss Club, and is now taking on the role as Helvetia secretary.

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