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A good year - and a good life

Address to the Annual Meeting of Swiss Society of New Zealand, Hamilton, June 5, 2005

by Sylvie Matteucci, Ambassador of Switzerland to New Zealand

Looking for a note - a word if you wish - to be the theme for this year's address I've stumbled somehow on the word 'good'. On the whole, it has been a good year. The economy of New Zealand has consolidated, and there have not been major disasters in the country - though we have been shaken up a few times in Wellington. From what I hear, the Swiss Society is thriving.

I shall not argue that we are entering an age of plenty, or of 'goodness'. But Swiss people in New Zealand can look forward to many an unforeseen challenge - and know that they have a good chance to master any of them. Not easy, of course, but doable. Asia is on the move, and as long as Asia progresses, New Zealand will have a chance to contribute and benefit from it. Looking back on my own work, I can clearly see the outlines of what I have achieved. It has been hard work, it has been good and solid work. The soil has been fertile, and I had good crops.

I've come to build bridges. High officials and Ministers have now walked across. Five years after my arrival Switzerland is no longer simply 'a European country with beautiful mountains', but a respected partner whose views are actively sought.

Switzerland and New Zealand share the same approach to world affairs - we deeply believe in international co-operation under common rules. New Zealand and Switzerland are small countries. The dangers that confront them originate in distant lands beyond the reach of their defences. Like tsunamis, however, these dangers can quickly create great havoc. Only a common early warning system will alert us and allow timely and concerted action.

When I came here I was told that the Swiss community in New Zealand was 'pflegeleicht' - easy to please. I've discovered

that it is a pleasure to be with them, and to learn from their experiences. My encounters with Swiss groups in places as distant as Dunedin, Christchurch or - just a couple of days ago - Blenheim, have filled me with a healthy respect for their achievements. I'd like to thank all of you who have shared your successes with me.

My next great discovery, upon my arrival, was the region of the Pacific. Travelling to islands as far as Samoa, or Tonga, I've come to appreciate that this country, far from being isolated, sits amidst a network of cultures. The Pacific has been good to me.

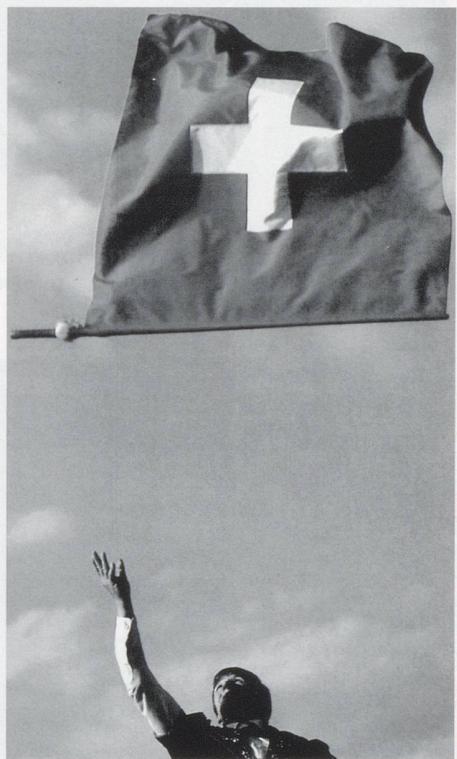
Alas, all good things must come to an end - and this is my last participation as a Patron in an Annual Meeting of the Swiss Society of New Zealand. I shall retire at the end of September and return to Switzerland. My husband would have liked us to stay on in retirement, and I admit that the temptation is strong. We'll be back to celebrate Christmas with kiwi friends and thereafter, I expect, we'll be back again and again.

Yes I had a good professional life - the substance of my work was always challenging. I met

many good minds on many good issues, and we did many good things together.

Now I'm looking forward to a 'good' life: travel, conversation - and no administration.

I'd like to thank you for helping to make my stay in New Zealand a unique and rewarding experience. And I wish you all the best for your future.



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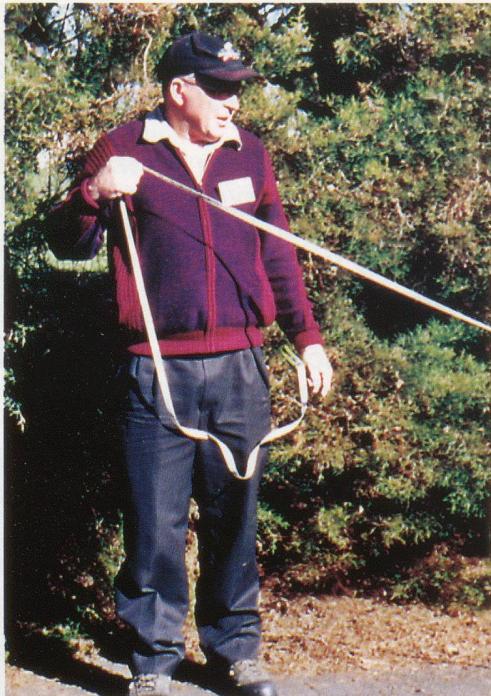
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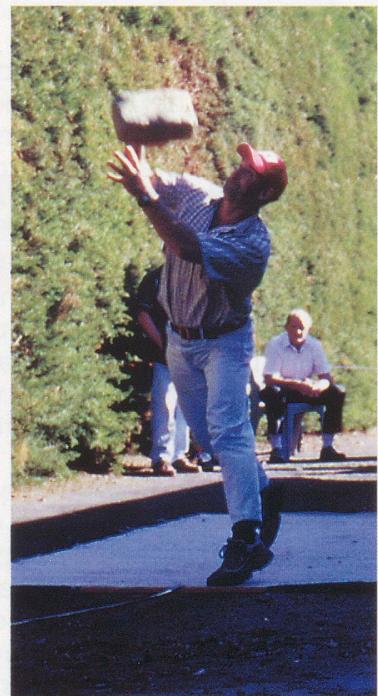
Swiss Society AGM



Herbert Staheli taking the measurements in the Shot put.



Peter Arnold giving it his best for Auckland in the Steinstossen.



Paul Hardegger in action in the steinstossen... well done in heaving the stone so far, Paul!



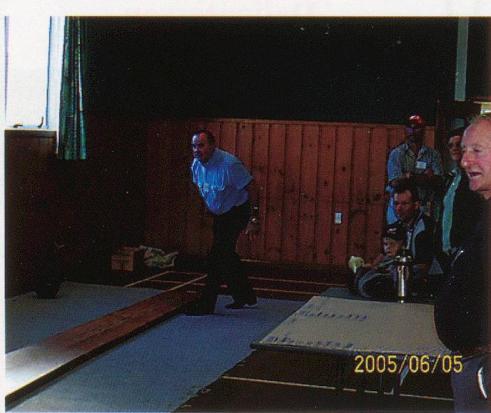
Mark Kiser from Taranaki in action at the Keglen, watched by several supporters.



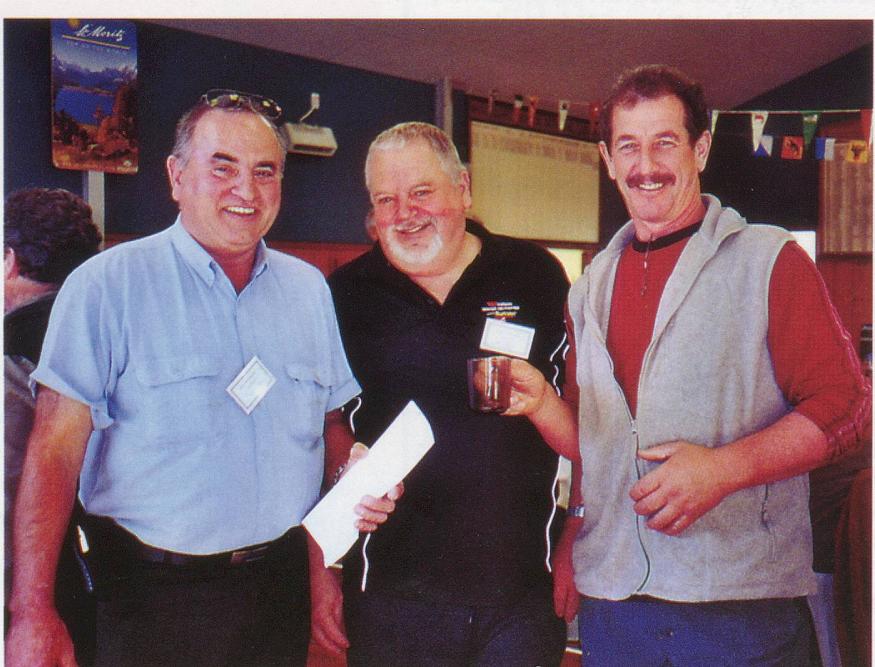
Erna Zimmermann and Heidi Seifert tallying up... looks like very serious business!



Aucklanders Louis and Peter (obscured) convincingly beat Lisette and Marianne in the Jassen.



Above: Auckland president, Fritz, giving it his all in the Keglen.



Right: Fritz, Louis and Peter celebrating after winning the cards... alas the celebrating would be short-lived!!!

Swiss Society AGM



Above: The lovely decorated hall with friendly Hamiltonians that greeted us on Saturday evening. The place mats looked terrific and were colourful.

Left: Silvia, Marianne and Paul, part of the Swiss Society executive.



Left: Jassers in serious thought!!!



Above: Fritz Scheidegger handing over the cowbell to Othmar Hebler, under the watchful eye of Herbert Staheli.



Above: Kathleen Zehnder intrigued by the lovely placemats.



Right: The Sound of Switzerland providing wonderful entertainment.