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Editorial

Well, we've just had our annual Swiss Club picnic here in Taranaki on Sunday 12th. On the previous afternoon we played-off our semi-final 'stoush' against our Wellington Compatriots to find who goes into the Final games against the winner of the 'northern division', Hamilton v Auckland! Of course, all members of every club would love to see that mighty wandering cow-bell hanging in their clubhouse or meeting place for a year, even if only occasionally! But, as we are all 'painfully' aware, the competition for this privilege is fierce although in a friendly and boisterous kind of way!

I started thinking two weeks ago about how to start this editorial and even what to write about! Nothing very exciting seemed to happen lately and my mind was all over the place and just would not coagulate anything into a decent, readable, story! Then our busy Picnic weekend arrived! A

couple of days after this event my sleepy brain slowly began to awaken and form the seeds of this editorial. So I will try and share with you in readable words some of my post-picnic thoughts!

Walking around amongst the picnic-crowd I could not help but marvel at everything, the people, from the very young to the very old, enjoying the beautiful day, the games, the music, and the camaraderie! And, probably more so for us 'oldies', the chance to meet and 'chinwag' with old friends and acquaintances, some of whom we may meet only once or twice a year! Yes, I did my share of reminiscing with old friends and began to realize by the end of the day that sadly, these 'oldies' were beginning to get rather 'thin on the ground!' But like many other oldies, Christine and I have been lucky to make new friends over the last 5 to 40 years which helps

greatly to bear the loss of old ones!

So, wandering around our clubhouse grounds I spotted the younger children having a whale of a time under the watchful eye of Mark Kiser. There were two or three rings marked out on the grass with a 'bulls eye' in the middle, which the children had to hit with a suitable 'weapon' and every time they 'scored' they got a lolly from the 'referee'! Needless to say the children were dead keen to run to the back of the queue after every turn, as long as Mark obviously had 'something' left in his large bag!

Judging by the commotion behind me, the Schwingen had started! So I headed for the hay bale arena! Sure enough, two midgets were in action, hither and thither around the sawdust ring. Or rather, one was a midget, as his opponent looked three years older and 50% heavier and stronger! But as I watched, my admiration grew by the minute! Here were these two very young lads, appearing very unevenly matched, yet giving us a performance which would have done credit to a couple of older 'professionals' straight out of the heart of Switzerland! Theoretically, this bout should have been over in ten seconds, but try as he might, the bigger lad just could not 'trip and pin' the little guy who seemed as slippery as an eel and fast as lightening! Eventually time ran out for a draw! After watching a few more bouts by the 'heavyweights', I spied an old friend in the distance who I wanted to talk with, so I took off after him.

Soon afterwards the first of our busy dairyfarming members left for home and the cows and within an hour more than half of the crowd had disappeared. High time for us oldies, who finished our last milking many years ago, to head into the clubhouse. We urgently needed a good 'schwarzes' to boost a bit of strength into our fading legs! And of course, a wonderful chance for more chin-wagging!

By the time you all receive this *Helvetica*, all our Clubs will have had their picnics. I hope you all had a wonderful day and the weather was as obliging for you as it was for us in Taranaki! I came home from this lovely day well satisfied. Yes, Swiss culture was still alive and well and kicking in New Zealand for the foreseeable future, I felt! But something was still 'bugging' me at the back of my mind. What was it? Then suddenly things clicked! I knew what my mind was trying to prick open in my memory banks! I started counting, yes, the Taranaki Swiss Club has just had its' 55th annual picnic! And I was there, as well as the first one on that beautiful February day in 1952 at Kaupokonui Beach!

Cheerio everyone
from Paul!

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