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President's Report

Well ... we have just had a very hectic weekend ... but it was thoroughly enjoyable and worthwhile!!! Unfortunately we didn't put on the glorious weather we had had previously or that we have had since!!! However, I'm certain, the hot soup went down very well!!!

Firstly my grateful thanks to all those Swiss Society members who made the effort to attend the weekends' festivities, and I sincerely hope that you all had a great time. A huge thank you to our Ambassador, Mr Beat Nobs, his wife Irene and children Sam, Simon and Christian for making the effort to attend the whole weekends' functions. We truly appreciated your participation, and I personally found your speech at the Annual General Meeting, Beat, very interesting and informative. You are people's people, and were very approachable and talkative ... something we have missed from our Ambassadors and their families for many years. Long may you stay!!!

A weekend like this certainly doesn't happen without a good committee and helpers, so to our Swiss Club members a BIG thank you for your efforts ... it was truly appreciated by everyone in attendance.

I am sure that most clubs will write a little about the AGM and the weekend as a whole, so I will leave it at this.

I hope that you all had a safe trip home, and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Wellington in June next year.

Regards

Marianne

AGM Speech 2006

It is my great pleasure to be here at the Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Society of New Zealand in Kaponga Taranaki. I would like to thank the board and members of the Taranaki Swiss Club for their great hospitality extended to my family and myself. It does set a great example for all the other Swiss Clubs in the country. Further to the recent article in the "Helvetia", let me take this opportunity to introduce you all to my family: my wife Irene, my sons Sam, Simon and Christian.

I have come here today to both inform you about the state of the bilateral relationship between Switzerland and New Zealand but also to demonstrate, that the Federal Council of Switzerland has sent me here to take care of the Swiss Community in New Zealand, to tell you about your rights and obligations that we Swiss citizens have. Last but not least I will give you some practical information regarding a number of more technical issues.

It is one of my main tasks as ambassador of Switzerland to New Zealand to intensify an already very good relationship. New Zealand and Switzerland share fundamental values, such as the protection of human rights, the protection of the environment, the rule of law, the basic concept, that the great challenges of our time need a common approach of all countries to find positive solutions on a global scale for our common future on this planet. That is why our two countries are increasingly working together very closely in a lot of multilateral fora such as the United Nations.

I am very proud to announce to you today, that mutual visits of members of government are planned for the first time in the history of our relations: New Zealand foreign minister Winston Peters will travel to Switzerland to be received by Federal Councillor Micheline

Calmy-Rey for an official visit in Bern this very month, while Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin will officially visit New Zealand in October of this year.

Also in the cultural field many of you were able to see two great Swiss cultural acts in New Zealand in 2006, namely the participation of the Theatre de Vidy of Lausanne with their play "Eraritjarjaka" during the Wellington Arts festival and of course the New Zealand tour of the world renown Mummenschanz theatre company. In the bilateral field we are hopeful to be able to engage in serious talks with the New Zealand government in the not too distant future on the conclusion of a "working holiday agreement".

Let me now turn to you, the Swiss abroad. I am very proud to announce, that as per today, there are no fewer than 6332 Swiss citizens registered with my embassy in Wellington, that ranks us at the same level as Belgium in Europe. As Swiss citizens, you do have civil rights, such as the right to vote. I can only encourage you to do so, whenever there is a chance. Switzerland values highly the political contribution of her citizens abroad. They do bring an important view point from the outside to our political arena. Your vote is highly appreciated. You can register with a community of your choice. Voting by Internet might be introduced in the not too distant future. Trials were carried out in a few cantons already.

Furthermore, please be advised, that if you wish to visit or transit the United States of America after October 26, 2006 you will need a new Model 06 passport (with biometric data) if you do not yet have a Model 03 issued. If you want to apply for one before the deadline, I would advise that you do so as soon as possible.

I do know of course, that the issue of the

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Always Have a Dream in Your Heart

**May you know, in your heart,
that others are always thinking of you.
May you always have rainbows that follow the rain.
May you celebrate the wonderful things about you.
And when tomorrow comes,
may you do it all over again.**

**May you remember how full of smiles the days can be.
May you believe that what you search for, you will see.
May you find time to smell the flowers,
and find time to share the beauty of you.**

**May you envision today as a gift,
and tomorrow as another.
May you add a meaningful page to the
diary of each new day,
and may you make "living happily ever after ..."
something that will really come true.**

**And may you always keep planting
the seeds of your dreams.
Because if you keep believing in them,
they'll keep trying their best ... to blossom for you.**

Collin McCarty

Contributed by Walter Seifert

Swiss AHV versus the New Zealand Superannuation is very dear to many of you. Even though I do understand your grievances very well I must remind you that the current policy by the New Zealand government is the law of the land and there is nothing I can do directly. Be assured however, that, as in the past, the embassy will not hesitate, within its mandate, to raise the matter in the appropriate form with the competent authorities at regular intervals.

I am looking forward to visiting all the Swiss clubs in New Zealand very soon. I am very pleased to come to Auckland in October to celebrate with you the 50th anniversary of the Auckland Swiss Club. Unfortunately, I will not be able to come to the Hamilton's Club 50th anniversary in July, but Hamilton, as well as Christchurch, are high on my agenda. But, watch out: The Taranaki Club set the stakes very high for other clubs to match in their great hospitality extended to me and my family, for which I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks again to the President of the Club Othmar Hebler, the President of the Swiss Society, Marianne Drummond and all of you of the Taranaki club, who made our stay here today a truly unforgettable one. Your work and your engagement in passing on our culture and traditions is very important and highly appreciated. I do urge you to keep your good work up for many years to come.

To conclude, please remember always, that the Embassy of Switzerland and I personally are there for you any time. The embassy is a vital link between the Swiss community in New Zealand and Switzerland, so don't hesitate to get in touch with us

Thank you for your attention

Beat Nobs
Ambassador of Switzerland