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My great pre-Christmas joy is writing letters to friends near and far. Over the years I have come into contact with many people. Some neighbours, colleagues, students, travel companions have become good friends, and writing to them individual letters once a year is like visiting them. I am always surprised how many seem to appreciate it: They write long letters back – and they get another lengthy letter from me, relating to what they wrote, telling them more about my life. This second round of writing takes me through to February or even March. Some reply a second time, some peter out .. till next pre-Christmas time comes around. These letters show how diverse life is. Some tell of heroic struggles and amazing courage, some tell of achievements, some of failures and new beginnings. The stories told and the stories that remain untold would fill many books.

Not everybody enjoys writing letters, I know. Talking on the phone is just as good – and faster and cheaper. With those various phone cards that have you dial impossibly long numbers it can cost as little as 3.8 cents per minute to ring Switzerland – which means you can talk for 52 minutes for the price of a \$ 2 stamp you'd need for a letter to Switzerland. There is a lot to be said for telephone calls: They are spontaneous, you get an immediate response, you can tell from the voice whether your friend is happy or worried. On the other hand, a letter can be read again and again, and you have something in front of you, you can think about it when you have time and are in the right mood.

I think it does not really matter whether you write or ring as long as you keep in touch and reach out to your friends – not only around Christmas. You might just happen to have chosen a crucial moment for your phone call where they really needed to feel that you care. It might be just the wrong moment, too – then try again, some other time - or write a letter; keep in touch.

Trudi

No doubt you are working hard on your New Year's resolutions, such as slimming down or perhaps putting more volunteer time into the local Swiss Club? My own example of a New Year's resolution has been about losing some weight. This came about after a visit to the doctor and the scales tipped - to the wrong side: an obvious message that something had to be done. As a result, I have joined the local gym in an effort to keep fit and healthy. Unfortunately, there's no evidence of a positive result yet.

I have had sufficient time to ponder and analyse as to the reasons why, such as (a) the hot and muggy weather in Wellington, which has not been conducive to working out in the gym, (b) at the gym you are surrounded by young people who don't actually need to lose any weight, (c) everyone else sitting outside relaxing, enjoying a

cool drink (which is what I'd like to be doing). Finally, (d) es isch ja doch unmöglich für e guete Schwizer nei z'säge zumene guete Cervelasalat und drüberine no öppis Chauts für e Durscht. As you can see, it is difficult to fight temptation, but I will endeavour to keep my New Year's resolution at the forefront of my mind.

As I have been bitten by the get-fit-and-healthy-bug, I would like to encourage everybody to participate in our sporting activity, the Cowbell competition. The Wellington Club will be travelling to Kaponga in two weeks' time and will vigorously compete against our friends in Taranaki !!! It promises to be a fun cultural and social activity for people of all ages.

I würde öich z'Resultat ir nächschte Helvatia mitteile, aber vilicht isch es de nume chlii gschribe !!!

Roland

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