

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 74 (2008)
Heft: [2]

Artikel: Bevor ich sterbe
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-943602>

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Maria-Theresia Hafner

Supplied by her family from Switzerland.

Maria Theresia was born on 26th of Feb 1951 as 4th and youngest child of Friedrich & Katharina Hafner.

Maria attended all her schooling in Frick and did a secretary's apprenticeship in Sisseln.

Maria met Ueli Luginbuehl at the "Jungbuergeraufnahme" in Frick in 1971 and soon they became an item. Not long after they discovered their mutual love for travelling. They first went to Lucerne where they both worked and saved money to go on their big OE. 1975 they bought themselves a VW van, transformed it into a camper van and then sent it ahead of them to New York, where they started their trip through North, Central and South America which lasted almost 3 years. They had many stories to tell about their adventures. One of their favourite ones was when they were in a remote place in South America and hungry, so they bought themselves a live chicken, which they planned to kill and eat, but it turned out to be too skinny so they decided they would keep it, fatten it up and kill it later. The chicken obviously liked his new "family"; while travelling it would sit in the middle, at night it would sit on one of the mudguards or sometimes even in the camper.

Maria & Ueli became so attached to the chicken that they couldn't kill it anymore. Every time when they crossed the border from one country to the next they had to hide the chicken on top of the car roof so that it would be safe from the customs officers and their dogs.

After 3 years of travelling Maria & Ueli returned to Switzerland to the big relief of their parents. But the travel bug wouldn't let them go and 1979 they returned to the USA to work and travel.

While on their first trip through South America they had met a Dutch couple on their honeymoon who would travel on their bicycles. Maria & Ueli both thought what a brilliant idea that was, so they too bought themselves push-bikes and camping equipment and off they went through Hawaii, Fiji, Australia and New Zealand.

In 1981 they went back to Switzerland again, but wished to return either to NZ or Australia. Not long

after, Ueli received an employment contract from a printing firm in Auckland. Nothing could keep them and again they travelled to NZ, where they stayed put, apart from a 2 years' excursion to Australia.

For a long time it had been their wish to have their own business. 1994 they started to rent out cars and camper vans. The business soon picked up and flourished so that they had to give up their jobs. That was a dream come true.

Family and friends from Switzerland would visit and get to know Maria & Ueli's beloved adopted country. They too would visit family and friends in Switzerland on a regular basis. On their last joint trip in 1999 Ueli became very ill and ended up in hospital, where a tumour was discovered. His only wish then was to return home with Maria, back to NZ where he passed away not long after.

Maria was heartbroken, she was sad, angry and very shaken. Life had to go on though and there was also a business to be run, but she never really got over Ueli's passing.

Last year Maria decided to sell her business and to move to Whangarei, where she wanted to buy a small house and start anew. But then again, as fate wanted it, everything would change.

Maria started to see "things" and also had a minor car accident, which was very unusual for her. She was put into hospital on Easter Sunday. A few days later doctors detected a very aggressive, fast growing brain tumour. Maria decided to have it operated on; chemo- and radio therapy followed, but to no avail. The last few months Maria would have gone through many ups and downs, doubts, hope, disappointments, anger, sadness. She was often confused but until the end she would battle for her life with admirable will power.

We will never forget Maria's joyful laughter and her loving ways of helping others.

We know that Maria is again back together with Ueli as is written on his tombstone: "until we meet again."

(Translation into English by Vreni Pfenniger).

Bevor ich sterbe

Noch einmal sprechen
von der Wärme des
Lebens

damit doch einige wissen:
Es ist nicht warm
aber es könnte warm sein

Bevor ich sterbe
noch einmal sprechen
von Liebe

damit doch einige sagen:
Das gab es
das muss es geben

Noch einmal sprechen
vom Glück der Hoffnung auf
Glück

damit doch einige fragen:
Was war das
wann kommt es wieder?

Erich Fried