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The other day I got the invitation to our Secondary School class reunion. I am not planning to go, but I read through the list of names and tried to remember my classmates, in the full knowledge that my memories of what they all looked like 50 years ago would bear little resemblance to the persons they are in 2008.

Some names were missing, and some had no address but a "passed away in ..." instead. Then I realized that the missing names had had a "passed away" behind them last time we had an invitation to a reunion, and I remembered Ursula. Ursula had everything going for her: She was tall and lean and very pretty with her blond curly hair. She was bright, and talented in music and sports as well. She had impeccable manners at all times, was fair and a natural leader. After secondary school she went to Teachers' Training College and then taught 1st and 2nd graders; she was loved by her students and got along well with their parents, too - and her colleagues thought highly of her. And nobody knew that she battled with depression. Or maybe very few did know, and tried as hard as they could to stand by her and encourage her to keep fighting. Most people around her lived in blissful ignorance, some in quiet admiration, some in secret jealousy. And the very few who really did know her lived in growing despair as they realized that no matter how hard they tried they could not reach her. They kept trying; they were exhausted, but they kept trying to the very end - unsung heroes, badly battered. It took them a long time to recover from what they at times perceived as a failure. It is so hard to accept that depression is a severe, often fatal illness, like so many other illnesses. Medication works sometimes, but not always. If your kidneys pack up, there is still dialysis, but there is no dialysis for the mind, that would flush out the black thoughts.

I won't go to our class reunion, but I'll think of Ursula and all the others who won't be there, either. And my heart goes out to Ursula's friends, who put so much energy into standing by her. I hope they are not angry with her; she battled as long as she could, thanks to her friends, but then she had the right to choose what she thought was best for her, and we have to accept her choice.

Ursula died many years ago, but the list of all the names brought her back to life in my memory - even if her name was not on the list.

Trudi



It is the time of year, when every Swiss Club begins planning their activities for the new year. These activities are quite often the catalyst for attracting new members to the clubs, providing a unique forum for Swiss cultural expression, while also catering to needs of our children and families.

Mind you, our cuisine evenings still prove to be the most popular, actively bringing people together, quite literally, around the table. My ideal condiment to a table discussion is a plate of Berner Platte close at hand, and a nice drop of wine. Earlier this year I attended the Hawkes Bay Wine Festival earlier this year, which expanded my knowledge and appreciation of grape juice!

I will endeavour to 'tune up' my chairing skills within the coming weeks leading up to the Swiss Society Annual General Meeting in Auckland.

Otherwise, my 'back up' plan is to ask Marianne Drummond to jump in. You see, you should always have a 'Plan B' up your sleeve, whatever the situation. The journey up 'Highway Number One' to Auckland, with the usual rest stop in Ohakune and a pie, will provide ample time for reflection, while gazing at the ski slopes.

By the way, Wellington Swiss Club lost the cowbell competition in Taranaki. Congratulations to the Taranaki Swiss Club!

I would like to encourage as many members as possible to attend the Swiss Society AGM, function and activities at the Auckland Swiss Club. The host club always puts in a lot of effort to make this event as enjoyable as possible for everyone, of all age groups. This is a great opportunity to meet our compatriots from all our Swiss Clubs! I look forward to seeing you all there!

Uf Wiederluege
Roland

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