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I'm writing this in the shade of the ginkgo tree on one of the series of 30+ plus days we've been having. It's glorious - as long as you don't have to work! I had been doing some bone-carving, but even the minimal physical effort involved in that had the sweat running down my arms and face. So - writing may be cooler.

Behind me under the umbrella, a jass game is in progress. The exclamations of triumph and dismay are mixed with mutterings of "*heisses Wetter*" - (hot weather) which excuses any wrong play or miscount. So far, so usual. But the difference in this game is that Hans Buess from Wellington is again one of the players. By the time you read this he will be back in Wellington, and no doubt back around the Wednesday-afternoon jass-table with Mary Tresch and Anna Coulson.

Over lunch we showed Hans the latest Helvetia with the news of Wellington's success (ah, how we love the jass!) in the Cowbell Competition - it was good to read what an excellent weekend everyone had.

The other comments at the jass-table are about the Soccer World Cup. Europe has been gripped by it ... cars are decorated with small flags, and large ones hang out of house windows. We even saw a Kiwi flag one day! But before I harrumph too loudly about *Meisterschaft* Madness, I remind myself how New Zealand is likely to be with the Rugby World Cup, and bite my tongue.

The All Whites did us proud though, and our chests puffed out when a BBC commentator said his surprise of the tournament was New Zealand's performance. To be 74th in the world and go home unbeaten (even if that's not the same as winning!) was quite something. Prime Minister John Key also featured on international television, glowing in the reflected glory of the team. Switzerland did well too, beating Spain in the first round - so we're claiming moral victory there - surely beating the winners makes you the *real* winner.

It's been a very sociable few weeks. Our community here could enter the World Party-Throwers Championships. Any excuse (Sepp's 80th birthday, the Anniversary of the establishment of this Holiday Camp...) it's "throw up the marquee, bring in the band, put a pig on the spit..." and we're away! The way that everyone gets into the party spirit, dancing, singing and swaying along with the music, and generally hooting and hollering with the odd yodel-flourish, reminds me of dances at our small country hall when I was a girl. Here, there is still that uninhibited enthusiasm that we seem to have lost in New Zealand. Perhaps it does help that few people have to drive home from our community parties ... but no, those who do need to drive stick to alcohol-free beer or mineral water, and sing as loudly as the rest.

Speaking of music, one recent weekend was a real mix. On Friday night, Margrit, Inge and I went to an outdoors performance of Donizetti's opera "The

Flood" in the Klosterhof by the cathedral in St Gallen. The updating was done with flair. Noah's Ark was a 1950's Saurer Post-Auto bus, which was driven up onto the stage at the beginning, and off



Noah, the Chauffeur, and the Saurer Ark

again with Noah and his family at the end. The tricky business of loading the animals onto the Ark was handled by the animal choruses lining up and donating some of their DNA. Now there's an advance on the credulity-straining Bible-story version!

The next day some of us drove to Arosa - Mani's and my first time there in the mountains above Chur. A young Bündner family has bought one of the holiday-houses here in our Altenrhein community, and quickly become part of the gang. He is the director of the Arosa brass and wind band, and the two boys both play in the band - and Saturday was a *Musikfest* at the cable-car stop half-way up the Weisshorn. So at about 2000 metres we sat in the warm sun for a great concert - accordion bands, family bands, the yodel-Chörli - and of course the brass band - and again, the audience was right in there, dancing, singing and swaying along. (No, we didn't do that at the opera!)

We took the cable-car up to the top of the Weisshorn, with snow and 360° views of the surrounding mountains - then down in Arosa again Roman and the two boys kitted themselves up and did part of the Ropes Course. The boys had done it before of course, and walked along the high rocking and rolling ropes and logs with the confidence of youth. Roman rose to the new challenge bravely. I was glad Mani decided to stay earth-bound, and that I was wearing totally impractical clothes so I could not even be tempted!

Some of you might remember Jack (Jibbo) Herzog - he and Mani came out to NZ at the same time - and then later Jack and Pierre Bieri (remember him too?) went on to Canada. Pierre and Inez now live near Jack and Virginia on Vancouver Island .. and we've been catching up with Jack and Virginia while they've been here on holiday. Ah the stories and reminiscences! There's a whole new perspective on the NZ I thought I knew, every time that generation of Swiss migrants to NZ get together. Let's not lose those stories. Perhaps a new project emerges...