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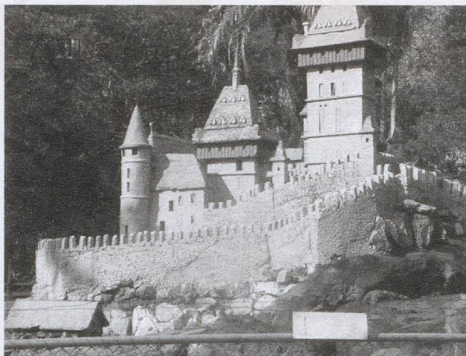
Well, it's the middle of October when I write this editorial, and we've just come through another wintery spell. New Zealanders my age still remember that they used to start the swimming season at Labour Weekend. I don't think I will have had a swim by the time you read this.

One of these incredibly unseasonal cold spells I decided to put the photos from my Australian holiday in August into an album: I had brilliant sunshine, lush greenery, beautiful orchids, tepid water all around me, and I could see the big bats glide past, and I heard the cockatoos screech - none of the sandflies biting, though. And I came across Bernie Havlik again and thought he would make a good topic for an editorial, although he was not Swiss.

Bernie Havlik was born in 1912, in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Somehow he survived two World Wars and then emigrated to Australia to leave Europe and its trials behind him. He drifted around for a while, worked here and there and ended up in an uranium mine in the Northern Territory. After almost 20 years the mine closed, but by then he called the small mining town of Batchelor home, and he wanted to stay on. He found employment with the gardening crew of the settlement, no doubt at a considerably lower hourly rate, and worked as a gardener for the next six years till his retirement. He planted and pruned and liked to keep the place neat and tidy.

A large rocky outcrop in the central park annoyed him no end, as there were always weeds growing in the cracks, and leaves accumulated around it - in short: it always looked untidy.

And then Bernie retired. You would think he was glad to leave this rock to his successors to cope with. Wrong! In all the hours weeding around the rock and probably cursing it in his native



Bernie Havlik's Karlstein castle in Batchelor, NT

Czech he had found that it would make the ideal place for a European castle - so he spent the next 13 years, until his death, on building a replica of Karlstein

Castle, building walls, towers, a drawbridge, a well, painting it, cleaning it, caressing it.

Bernie died in 1990. Twenty years later, his castle is still there. It looks great - maybe a bit unusual in this oasis in the Australian outback. A plaque explains its history - a monument not only to Bernie and his tenacity, but even more a reminder that with a little bit of imagination we can turn a vexatious rocky outcrop into something positive - and it doesn't have to be a castle.

Inde

Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc.

Patron	H. E. Dr Marion Weichelt Krupski
President	Roland Schütz, 35 East Street, Petone, Lower Hutt 5012 Ph h 04 568 6772, w 04 568 5737. Email: moehau2@gmail.com
Vice President	Max Fuhrer, 8 Curacao Place, Grenada Village, Johnsonville, Wellington 6037. Ph 04 478 0003.
Secretary/Editor	Trudi Brühlmann, 401 Marine Drive, Mahina Bay, Eastbourne, Lower Hutt 5013. Ph 04 562 8019. Email: bruhlmann@xtra.co.nz
Treasurer	Heidi Amelung, 32 Hinau Street, Eastbourne, Lower Hutt 5013 Ph 04 562 7568. Email: gravure@xtra.co.nz
Riflemaster	Mark Kiser, 140 Pukengahu Rd, RD 23, Stratford. Ph 06 762 2922

Delegates to the Swiss Abroad Conference in Switzerland

Delegate	Othmar Hebler, 9 Larlin Height, RD 15, Hawera. Ph 06 278 6878
Deputy Delegate	Emanuel Züst, 43 Cheltenham Drive, Kapiti Village, Paraparaumu Ph 04 905 0017

Secretaries of the Swiss Clubs

Auckland	Heidi Wilson, 53 Rothesay Bay Road, Rothesay Bay, Auckland. Ph 09 478 9751. Email: heidi.wilson@hotmail.com
Hamilton	Anita Zuber, PO Box 24061, Hamilton 3253 Ph 07 856 2414, mob ph 027 498 5170. Email: zuber@xtra.co.nz
Taranaki	Marianne Drummond, 508 Salisbury Road, RD 24, Stratford. Ph 06 7628 757. Email: littleacres@xtra.co.nz
Wellington	Odile Stotzer, 24 Fitzherbert Street, Alicetown, Lower Hutt 5010. Ph 04 586 3095. Email: odilestotzer@gmx.net
Embassy of Switzerland	Level 12, Maritime Towers, 10 Customhouse Quay, Wellington 6140. PO Box 25004, Wellington 6146. Ph 04 472 1593, Fax 04 499 6302. Email: wel.vertretung@eda.admin.ch Website: www.eda.admin.ch/wellington
Consulate of Switzerland	Peter Deutschle, PO Box 302239, North Harbour, North Shore City 0751. Ph 09 366 0403. Email: auckland@honorarvertretung.ch