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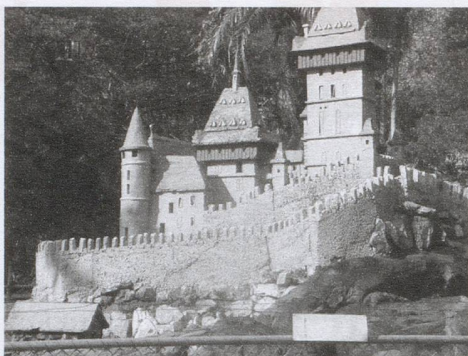
Well, it's the middle of October when I write this editorial, and we've just come through another wintery spell. New Zealanders my age still remember that they used to start the swimming season at Labour Weekend. I don't think I will have had a swim by the time you read this.

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

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