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Are you proud of being Swiss? Am I proud of being Swiss? I certainly consider myself very **lucky** to have been born in Switzerland. I was lucky to have all the opportunities Switzerland offered me and my generation. I was lucky to be steeped in the tradition of Swiss style democracy. But I did not choose to be born in Switzerland or to be Swiss. Even now, after twenty years in New Zealand, I'm still very Swiss in my outlook. I can't help it - and I wouldn't want to. I can do nothing about it; it wasn't my choice. My choice was to come to New Zealand, my choice was to become also a New Zealand citizen - so I can be proud of being New Zealander on top of being Swiss.

It is a different story for second generation Swiss in New Zealand who choose to be part of the New Zealand Swiss clubs or the Swiss Society in New Zealand. They could just melt into New Zealand society, maybe even ki-wify their Swiss name. Some do just that, and later generations might only vaguely remember that there was a Swiss element in their ancestry somewhere. However, some second generation Swiss grow into the Swiss clubs naturally, because their Swiss club plays an important part in their parents' life. Some come back to their Swiss roots only later in life, only gradually remembering their Swiss heritage. Whether they grow into the Swiss club or come back after a break - they all have a choice and if they choose to value their Swiss heritage they can be proud of being Swiss. Second and third generation Swiss have become increasingly prominent and play an increasingly important role in some New Zealand Swiss clubs; they guarantee a natural rejuvenation of the clubs and the club committees.

Some members of the New Zealand Swiss clubs aren't even second or third generation Swiss; they are associates, married to a Swiss (first or second or third generation...), or friends of a Swiss. They choose to join the

Swiss clubs to have a good time with their partners and friends. Some go further than that: They take an active part, help with the dishes, come to working bees, look after the bar - and some are even willing to help with the running of their Swiss club. Some might hold a Swiss passport because they want to go the whole way and express their loyalty to Switzerland. In Switzerland, somebody who would like to become Swiss after many years in Switzerland or even having been born in Switzerland has to pass an examination not many born Swiss would pass. Abroad it is a bit easier, as becoming Swiss

brings no advantages and is mainly a declaration of allegiance. In Switzerland, 'new' Swiss were called 'Papiirli-schwiizer'. I'm glad this expression has no English translation for our friends who love Switzerland and choose to become Swiss and help run the New Zealand Swiss clubs. And I'm glad we are in New Zealand and not in Switzerland, where a citizen from a neighbouring canton is still a foreigner after twenty years and therefore wouldn't be entrusted with a seat in the Gemeinderat...

Trudi

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