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Greetings from the President

Dear Helvetia Readers,

Slowly but surely I am starting to believe what adults used to tell us when we were small: "Wait until you have kids, then the years will just fly past". And they were right. Where has the year gone? It seems that I have only just put the Xmas decorations away and out they will come again in the next couple of days...

The Advent time was always very special for us growing up. I remember waiting with anticipation for the evening of the 6th December – peeking out the window we would see 'Samichlous', usually with his donkey and some bells, leaving behind his footprints in the snow, visiting us and all our neighbours. What I remember most about those nights though was the quietness of the village when it was snowing. There was no sound to be heard at all – that's when we knew snow was falling. And every night each house had a Christmas tree hanging up outside with electric lights in the form of candles. The whole street (and my village only had one main street) was lit up by Christmas trees on the left and the right. To this day I truly believe that my childhood Christmases were just perfect.

One fascinating aspect of Switzerland certainly is the countless traditions that we still celebrate very strongly back home. In this issue of the Helvetia we would like to tell you a bit more about beautiful, individual Christmas and New Year's celebrations in various parts of the country. I'm quite sure that most of you have different traditions yet again – maybe you could share them with us for another Helvetia issue?

We are also concentrating on the Visp region in the canton of Valais since that's where the next National Shooting Competition will be held. Hopefully those of you that are attending the 'Schützenfest' can make good use of our articles and fun tips. And don't forget to practise your 'Wallisärtitsch'!

I have to pull my thoughts back to New Zealand now... The committee of the Auckland Swiss Club recently had the great pleasure to meet our new

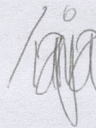
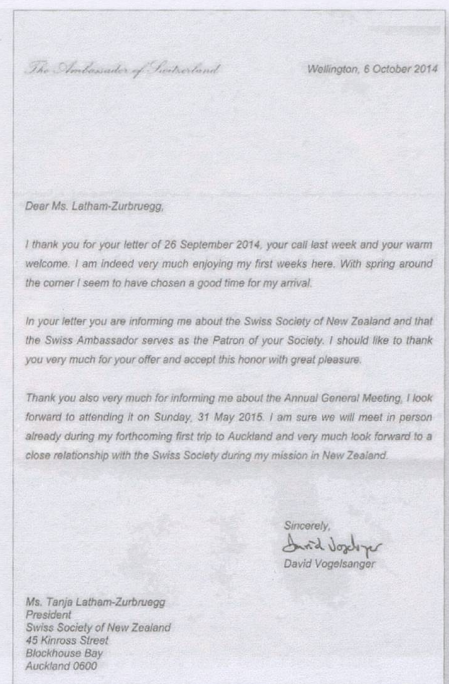
Ambassador Dr. David Vogelsanger. I am sure we will continue to have a strong relationship with the embassy so we can keep our Helvetia readers up-to-date with current affairs from Switzerland. On behalf of the Swiss Society I have formally invited Mr. Vogelsanger to become our new patron and he gladly accepted this honorary position. Thank you very much!

We are very fortunate to have found a new, amazing editor for our Helvetia team. Thank you Victoria for so graciously accepting this role! It's great to have you on board! With your enthusiasm and wealth of ideas I am sure we will continue to have fabulous Helvetia magazines!

A huge thank you to all our faithful readers for your encouraging comments. It's great to know that you enjoy reading our Helvetia as much as we love putting it together for you!

I wish you and your families and friends a Merry Christmas and a wonderful, happy and healthy New Year. May all your dreams come true.

All the best,

Thank you to our Advertisers and Suppliers

We thank our valued Advertisers for their support over the year.

You are of great importance to the ongoing success of the Helvetia.

A big thank you also goes to McCollam's Printing and Stephen White for their generous and professional services in printing the Helvetia and to Mail Distribution Services and Wayne Longley, who handle the distribution of the Helvetia admirably.

Season's Greetings, Swiss Society Committee and Helvetia Team



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