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Embassy News

Thank you, Wivian Buckrell!



After more than ten years of excellent service, Wivian Buckrell has retired as the Executive Assistant to the Swiss Ambassador to Wellington. The Embassy is still recovering from this blow and trying to cope, but our heartfelt wishes accompany Wivian into her very well-deserved more quiet life.

She came to New Zealand from Sweden as Wivian Malmström and married her Kiwi husband Paul. She has faithfully served five Swedish and three Swiss Ambassadors in the course of her diplomatic career and also successfully run the Swedish Consulate in Wellington on behalf of an Honorary Consul, after Sweden had closed its Embassy. At the Swiss Embassy, she was by far the most experienced staff member and everybody came to her for advice. With her professional competence and always smiling attitude, she was appreciated by all the New Zealand authorities she dealt with and was the senior member of the informal Association of Ambassadors' Assistants.

Wivian took a particular interest in the Pacific Islands where her Ambassadors frequently had to travel. Things are done there a bit differently from Wellington, but she handled that with the same easy-going temperament she showed with Ministers and MPs at the Beehive. Not many people deal with the Royal Palace in Tonga or the Governor's Office in American Samoa on a regular basis...

We never held it against Wivian that she is Swedish and not Swiss since many New Zealanders don't know the difference anyway. I always explain that we have mountains and they have the monarchy. New Zealand has both. Wivian became an honorary Swiss over the years and even an active member of

the Swiss Club of Wellington. The whole Swiss community knows and loves her.

Personally, I am deeply grateful to Wivian because she was due to retire before I even arrived in Wellington and she graciously accepted my proposal, made from Africa, to stay for a few more months to help me to get around. She stayed on for a year and a half and I feel I could not even have done half the job during that time without her assistance. We saw Wivian off with a farewell dinner to which even the head of Protocol of the Maori King flew down from Hamilton and a party with the Embassy staff. One of the gifts we gave our friend was a bit of a selfish one, two Swiss cookbooks in English because we all love Wivian's wonderful pies... Happy retirement, Wivian, and we look forward to seeing you often at the Embassy and at the Swiss Club!

David Vogelsanger, Ambassador



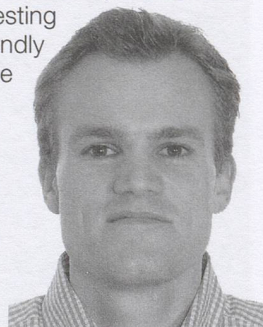
Dear fellow Swiss,

At the beginning of April 2016, I arrived in Wellington. I feel honored to have received the opportunity to work as a trainee at the Embassy of Switzerland in New Zealand for six months.

After having accomplished a master's degree at the University of Zurich, I worked as an auditor in an international company in Zurich for four years. Now, as a trainee at the Embassy of Switzerland, I am very eager to gain insights into the diplomatic and consular work. Among many others, my tasks will include the analyses and writing of a report about the Swiss AHV pension scheme in the context of the New Zealand Superannuation.

Of course, I don't want to return to Switzerland before having seen as much as possible of the country. Therefore, I look forward to discovering the beautiful nature and interesting cities with its friendly people during the next couple of months.

Andreas Buchs



Dear HELVETIA readers,

My name is Tamara, I am a rare specimen of Swiss-Italian from Ticino living in New Zealand.

I flew to Wellington in September 2013 on a one way ticket, to start my yearlong sabbatical studying English.

It felt scary, surreal and exciting. Although I had previously travelled quite a lot, this was my first long trip by myself and I knew that one of the biggest challenges would be to get on well with myself in order to enjoy this experience.

My initial image of New Zealand was quite naive and stereotypical, mostly built on the Lord of the Rings films. For me it was a fairytale country, with green pastures, sheep, fascinating volcanoes and wild beaches. This was my motivation for choosing it as the starting point for my sabbatical.

I spent my first three months in Wellington completing my English course, after which I took the ferry to Picton where I spent four weeks WWOOFing (World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) at a lodge in Cape Jackson, a very remote place in the Marlborough Sounds.

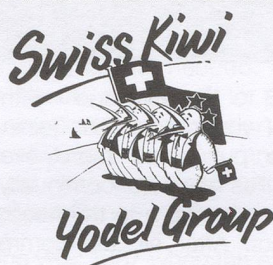
After this unusual, yet memorable Kiwi experience I was now ready to discover the South and North Islands by bus, with a very heavy backpack.

I spent two wonderful months travelling around enjoying New Zealand's breathtaking landscapes, meeting people from all over the world and learning more about the country and myself. I also learnt what belonged in my backpack and what was there just to hurt my back. I fell in love with the country and with a native boy who, being a 3D artist in the film industry, turned out to be somehow responsible for the romantic idea of New Zealand that brought me here in the first place.

Swiss AHV / New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) and Section 70 – “Window of Opportunity”

At the end of the sabbatical I returned to Switzerland for a year, to my previous career as a secondary school teacher. During this year I realised that what really matters in life persists despite distance. At the beginning of March, six months after my return to Wellington, I started a new professional adventure, at the Embassy of Switzerland. I am proud to work in such a stimulating environment while keeping contact with both the Swiss and the Kiwi realities. For me, going to work is like going back home a little every day, which makes me happy. I am grateful for this opportunity and I look forward to meeting you soon!

Tamara Winkler



The Swiss Kiwi Yodel Group is a fun loving group of guys that really bring on the homesickness when singing their wonderful Swiss Yodels. We are always on the lookout for younger Swiss male singers or recent immigrants with sound knowledge of the Swiss dialect and an interest in traditional Swiss Folk music who wish to keep up the tradition. Any one interested please get in touch with:
 Erich Widmer: e.r.widmer@xtra.co.nz
<http://yodelgroup.wix.com/swiss-kiwi-yodlers>

Over the last 15 months I have received an abundance of feedback from all over the country concerning the New Zealand government’s treatment of our Swiss Pension (AHV). It is a relief to hear so many people are waking up to this injustice. Unfortunately most of them realise the trap they are in after they have filled out the application for NZ Super. Over the last two years I contacted and talked to a number of New Zealand politicians on this issue - the direct deduction of overseas pensions from New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) under Section 70 of the Social Security Act. I have also been in very close contact with the Swiss Embassy concerning this unjust saga and I can assure all, the Embassy in Wellington is taking this issue very very seriously. I would like to thank the Ambassador David Vogelsanger and Jürg Bono for all their dedicated and committed work behind the scenes on this.

I now consider it necessary to get political.

Without political action from within New Zealand, I do not see any possibility of a change in the near future. Unfortunately the governing National Party has no interest in changing the present system. Labour and the Greens have at least realised that it should be looked at some time in the future but have no clear strategy. I have also approached New Zealand First Party, the only party actively working to change this unjust system. I have written about their plans and concepts on previous occasions.

In the short, medium or long run, every Swiss living in New Zealand who has worked in Switzerland prior to immigrating has paid AHV; and on reaching the age of 65 is entitled to a Swiss pension based on the amount contributed into the AHV insurance system. Sooner or later, we will all be affected by Section 70 robbing and looting each one of us of our pension which we have paid for ourselves.

At the present time there are over 85,000 super annuitants affected by Section 70 in New Zealand, increasing every year. 85,000 votes equates to about 3.5% of the total voter turnout (based on 2014 turnout). Why have successive governments ignored such a powerful voter issue? The reason is because the Section 70 group is seen as disjointed, conflicted and fragmented. These dispersed factions include us Swiss, but also established UK migrants (the largest group), recent UK, Dutch, German, Austrian, US, returning expat Kiwis who have worked overseas coming back to New Zealand to retire, and their affected New Zealand spouses.

Imagine the political strength if all those affected (now or in the future) by Section 70, unite under one strong political voice.

In the last financial year (2015), the New Zealand government collected NZ\$ 322'778'017.75 from people receiving an overseas pension of which NZ\$ 1'458'670.53 was from Swiss pensioners.

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER



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Embassy News

Mobile passport station will be in Auckland again in December 2016



Dear compatriots,

In December 2016 it is the turn of the Embassy of Switzerland to fly the extra mile!

Swiss citizens residing in New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Niue and American Samoa will have the opportunity to apply for a new Swiss Passport and/or ID in Auckland instead of flying to Wellington for this purpose. This service will be offered exclusively from the **5th till the 9th of December 2016**.

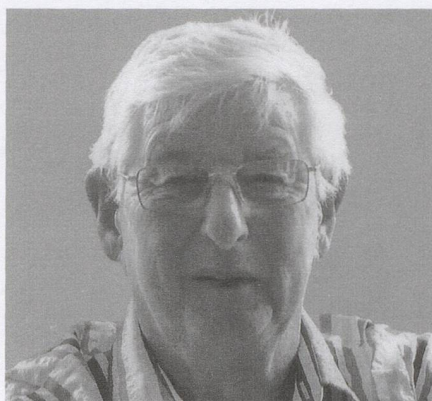
All Swiss citizens registered with the Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington will be informed about the exact details and procedure by e-mail or letter three months before the date. Please do not register your online applications for this visit or contact the Embassy of Switzerland or the Helvetia editorial office before receiving those instructions, as all details are to be defined and communicated at a later stage.

Please make sure that your personal data are up-to-date and that also your family members are duly registered with the Embassy in order to receive the detailed announcement and to be able to benefit from this service.

Should you miss the opportunity of having your biometric data captured in Auckland, you can always apply for a new identity document at our Wellington office under the regular procedure. Please refer to our website: www.eda.admin.ch/wellington under "Services".

You may also have your biometric data registered in Switzerland or in another Swiss representation abroad. Please note, however, that you have to lodge an online application on www.schweizerpass.ch beforehand, with the indication "Wellington" as your place of registration and a remark mentioning where and when you wish to have your biometric data taken. After our verification, your passport application will be forwarded to the passport office you have selected and you will get a confirmation.

Obituary



Sydney (Syd) Melville

01 January 1929 – 15 March 2016

Many of our members joined Marie-Theres to farewell Syd and share precious memories in a special ceremony, complete with Alphorns, Yodlers, and Swiss Ladies singers. As it often happens on these occasions, we got to know even more details about Syd's interesting, full life.

He was born in his beloved Dunedin, the eldest son of Janet and Hamilton Melville, and an older brother to John and Alice. His Dad was of Scottish origin. Syd grew up in Dunedin, and on leaving school he worked at the Herald. His talents were soon recognised, and his employer supported him to study accountancy at Otago University.

Syd has always been very community oriented; he was a well liked and hard working member in service organisations and in many sports- and other clubs.

After qualifying as an accountant, Syd worked for a time at the Dunedin Council before moving to Balclutha, and later on to the Solomon Islands where he was a Town Clerk. During his five years in the Solomons, the community adopted him and even hoped he would choose a local wife. But that was not meant to be.

Syd returned to New Zealand in the 1970s to settle in Auckland. He was the treasurer for the then Waitemata City Council, situated in Grey's Avenue in Auckland city. It was whilst he was working there that he met the woman who would become his wife, Marie-Theres.

Romance blossomed for the couple. On one of their many trips to Switzerland they decided to marry. The family was delighted to be able to attend their wedding in October 1985 without having to travel halfway around the world.

Both Syd and Marie-Theres enjoyed travelling. Marie-Theres has many fond memories of their trips around the South Island. Syd was very proud of his origins. He loved both Dunedin and Scotland, and was an avid fan of the Highlander Rugby Team. They both also treasured their biennial holidays in Switzerland where they had a large family and many friends to visit.

Syd liked being Swiss as well as New Zealander. In fact one of his happiest occasions was receiving his Swiss Passport. They both enjoyed many happy times with the Swiss community in New Zealand. He was a great support to Marie-Theres when she was involved in the club as committee member and president. We also thank Syd for having been the Swiss Club's auditor for many years. Syd got good at Swiss activities, and offered us stiff competition, be it in playing cards, shooting or bowling.

We will remember Syd as a caring, witty and sometimes cheeky friend. Our sympathies and love go to Marie-Theres; we hope to be able to give you some support in this difficult time.



sBündel

By Hanspeter Treichler

Was haett mini Fee
am erste Tag
noed alles mir i dWiege ggleit
en Sack voll Treum
en Huufe Stolz
e Hampfle Widerborstigkeit

Es Heft mit Gschichte
fuer uf dReis
und dFarbe vome Raegeboge
es Chummertuech
en Pfiil wo zeigt
was wahr isch und was ggloge

Träg all die Sache
sitthär mit
das Bündel isch nöd schwär
ha's nie ufgmacht
und ha schiss
vilicht isch's underdesse lär.

Contributed by Edith Hess