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Obituaries



Conrad Meinrad Kuriger

13 December 1922 – 1 September 2016

Born on the 13th December 1922 in the Kuriger farmhouse at Oaonui, Con was the third of eight children born to Swiss immigrants, Johann and Rosalina Kuriger (nee Kälin), both from Einsiedeln. The Kuriger family spoke only Swiss at home in the early years and Con only learned English when he started school. He walked three kilometres to school, often in bare feet. At home there was no power, telephone, radio or running water. Outings were on horse and gig to Church in Opunake and visiting Swiss families in the wider district. Con rarely missed the Annual Swiss Picnic or 1st of August celebrations.

A love of farming started early in his life with the whole Kuriger family involved in milking cows by hand. Con got his first job at the age of thirteen. After leaving school he was soon back in Oaonui helping the family with dairying and breaking in the land. Con got his drivers' licence at the age of fifteen and held this for seventyseven years. It is noted that every car he owned was a "Ford"!

In 1953 Con purchased his own farm in Oaonui. That same year he attended the only Swiss cabaret ever held in Inglewood where he met Theresa Joan Butler. Theresa was a daughter of Alois (Louis) and Mavis Butler of Inglewood, and sister to Lou Butler the current Patron of the Taranaki Swiss Club. Con and Theresa were married 359 days later on 3rd July 1954. They welcomed nine children who kept them busy as they arrived over a sixteen year period. Con and Theresa continued farming in Oaonui, purchasing the neighbouring property in 1970. They remained farming there until 1985 when they retired to Opunake.

Con developed a love of the harmonica in his early years. He also learned the piano accordion and enjoyed entertaining his children with this. The love of the harmonica continued throughout his life and he continued to play up until weeks prior to his death.

After 25 years of marriage, Con and Theresa travelled overseas for the first time. Over the next fifteen years they had trips to Australia to visit children, a trip to Canada and two trips to Europe. They enjoyed special times in Switzerland meeting Kuriger and Kalin relatives and brought home a suitcase of Cuckoo Clocks and Swiss Army Knives for the family.

Three months after celebrating 40 years of marriage, Theresa passed away suddenly on 2nd October 1994. Con's life changed dramatically as he missed Theresa terribly. Life carried on, and so did he with his many visits to family and friends, and also travelled within New Zealand.

In 2004 he moved to New Plymouth to be closer to his children, which was challenging to leave the Opunake District after over 80 years. He settled and enjoyed the new friendships made through the church and enjoyed outings with groups he joined. In late 2015 he moved into full time care, and once again formed new friendships.

Con was great with dates, figures and family connections, never missing a birthday, but most famous in the family for his "Conisms" or "Grandad jokes" – off the cuff statements that will be remembered for many years to come.

Con loved his family, lived by his faith, and was proud of all things Swiss. He is missed by his nine children – Theresa Strachan, Conrad Kuriger, Louis Kuriger, Jenny Dravitzki, Lynette Barnard, Noeline Van der Poel, Kathryn Schuler, Beverley Barkley, Brendan Kuriger, his sons and daughters-in-law and his 29 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

to Brunnen to work in a delicatessen. Her youngest sister Rosie and brother-in-law to-be Joe also worked there. This is where she met Oskar who was employed as a truck driver. Joe & Rosie moved to New Zealand and relayed to Oskar all the wonderful opportunities on offer. As a result, in mid-August 1954, Oskar set off for New Zealand. Agnes had to remain in Switzerland while she waited for her permit to arrive. She spent those few months taking her turn to care for her father, as her mother had passed away in 1952.

In November, Agnes packed her belongings into a trunk and travelled by ship & plane to New Zealand, arriving on Christmas Eve.

Oskar and Agnes married in February 1955 and a month later they moved to Hawera. It is here that Peter was born. 1957 saw them move up to Taupiri in the Waikato where they began dairy farming and working in various jobs. In 1961 they began a 50/50 sharemilking job in Springdale. This is where their two daughters Monica & Rita were born. In 1966 they purchased their first farm of 107 acres in Elstow, where they milked 110 cows. In 1976 they purchased a bigger farm at Tatuanui, where they stayed until 1986 when they moved across the road to their 18 acre retirement block.

Agnes was a Nana to ten grandchildren, and she played an important role in their lives. She loved attending their school activities especially livestock days, prizegiving, piano recitals & school productions. There were numerous tramping trips up Mt Te Aroha and surrounding areas. She absolutely loved spending time with her grandchildren.

Agnes was a long serving active member of the Red Cross, Rural Woman, Catholic Women's League and the Legion of Mary where she made many life-long friends. Agnes was a very skilled gardener, and has shared this with many including the children of St. Joseph's School in Morrinsville where she tended to the gardens for many years. The children said that Nana could often be seen lugging buckets of compost and weeds around the school.

Another one of Agnes's many talents was her knitting. She loved nothing better than knitting booties or jumpers for new-born babies and for the Red Cross. She also knitted numerous slippers for the children of St Joseph's, and she was delighted when not long ago, one of her great-grandchildren came home and said that she had a pair of slippers, knitted by Agnes.

Agnes has always been a resourceful but generous woman who worked incredibly hard. She had a great sense of humour, an adventurous spirit and an unfaltering faith. Agnes is survived by her husband Oskar, three children, ten grandchildren and seven greatgrandchildren.

Members of the Taranaki and Hamilton Swiss Clubs and The Swiss Society of New Zealand extend their sincere sympathy to the Kuriger and Reichmuth families.



Christina Agnes Reichmuth (nee Businger)

27 March 1928 – 5 September 2016

Christina Agnes was born on 27th March 1928, in Merenschwand in Switzerland, the third child of nine to parents Kasper & Agnes Businger who were dairy farmers with a herd of seven cows. She began school at the age of seven. She would walk to school and home for lunch, then back to school for afternoon lessons. Winter was tough with deep snow and often the children walked in the dark. At school Agnes learnt to sew, mend and knit and her dream was to become a seamstress.

At age of fifteen Agnes left school and started her first job in Aristau as a housemaid, which included housework, preparing meals, washing & gardening. She continued with this type of work for five years in various jobs in Arth, Neuenkirch & Schwyz. Agnes was now 20 years old and she purchased her first set of wheels, a brand new push-bike which made her life a lot easier. In 1951 Agnes moved