Words from President and Editor

Editor's Report

As you may well know, your editor Heidi is away for a month together with her husband Richard spending time touring Cuba, Salsa dancing and practising her Spanish. In the meantime she has left me holding her baby "The Helvetia". Heidi has done an amazing job for this issue as well as the previous three issues so it has been relatively easy filling her shoes, and with the magic of Peter Deutschle, the magazine seems to come together nicely – fingers crossed! We are ever so grateful to Peter for guiding us through this transition and being very patient with us. It's not been an easy task following in the Auckland committee's footsteps.

By the time you read this issue you will already be used to saying and writing "2017", and all those New Year's resolutions may or may not be in place. I hope you all had a relaxing break with family and friends. Like for a lot of you, our summers are spent with family and friends visiting from Switzerland. My husband Walter and I have lived together in New Zealand since 1975 and I often wish we would have kept a guest book recording the numerous relatives, friends and friends of friends who have stayed with us over the years.

This year is special as we have our daughter Bernadette and her son, 5 year old Jerome visiting us for a month. Of course they are family and treated as such, whereas if we have relatives who we don't know so well, it is always a bit of a strain on relationships with trying to feed and accommodate everyone and deciding what things we would like to show them and how long it is appropriate to host these guests. It does have its advantages and disadvantages – sometimes you can take your guests to beautiful places in NZ where you can appreciate what is on our doorstep and look through someone else's eyes. They also have lots of things to talk about and it's great hearing comparisons of Switzerland to New Zealand.

Happy reading throughout 2017 and I hope you all find something of interest in this Helvetia issue. We don't mind feedback, whether it's positive or negative, so feel free to drop us a line via email: anita.zuber@swiss.org.nz

Cheers, Anita

Secretary and stand-in Editor for this issue

Dear Society Members

It's actually still December and I am writing my February report so I am not sure I can actually ask you how your Christmas break went. Anyway, time is racing on and 2016 will be in the past by the time you read this and I sincerely hope you had a good Christmas break and I wish you a very successful year ahead.

What did you think of the last edition? I did enjoy reading the Peter Arnold story, a man promoting our home country in a very unique way around the world. Thank you Heidi for sharing it with us! The Waldvogels are very dear friends of ours and whilst I know their story pretty well, I am pleased that others can now enjoy reading about their adventures in this issue as well. Talking about our home-land, I thought the opening of the new Gotthard tunnel was a momentous occasion and the report in the Swiss Review was very good. I often wonder what a diagram of Switzerland would look like highlighting all the tunnels in the country - probably a bit like a spider's web!
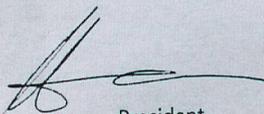
In December 2016 another important mission was launched in Switzerland, or should I say through Swiss organisations. It's a three month expedition to the Antarctic to "unlock the secrets of our climate". My good friend Ueli from Switzerland alerted me of this event and you may hear a bit more on this later..

Closer to home, the last quarter was another busy time for me personally and I am pleased to confirm that despite all this I completed the 160km ride around Lake Taupo in late November. Our little champion grandson is nearing one year and we just love the distraction and joy he brings to us.

I had a stay in hospital just before Christmas but we still planned to spend time in Whitianga over the New Year. It had to be more R+R rather than biking and all sorts of other activities. I am looking forward to my sister's visit in January and my younger brother in March. As you can see, plenty happens here!

Not so long ago I received an email from Roland Isler from the CSA Oceania reminding us of the importance to embrace the changes in communicating with each other. With this in mind I encourage you to have a look at: www.csa-oceania.org. You will find some interesting articles. Unfortunately some of them are only in German but you will see lots of activities and opportunities to join in, via all kinds of media outlets.

That's it until next time. Do enjoy the summer time!
Greetings from the Helvetia Team

President

News update: Test operation momentarily stopped in Sion

Robots too, can be bad drivers. As the world prepares for the future of driverless cars, there are bound to be a few accidents. The trial on front page of this issue has hit a snag!!!

From PostBus:
Because an autonomous shuttle touched the open tailgate of a parked van in Sion on 21 September 2016, PostBus has decided to interrupt the test operation with the Smart Shuttle for the time being. Nobody got hurt. There was minor property damage. PostBus and the vehicle manufacturers are continuing to analyse the causes of the incident and take the necessary measures.

The problem echoes that of previous driverless car accidents, where sensors were blind to an unusual circumstance.

In February, a Google driverless car was ruled at fault in a crash, as it changed into a lane prematurely and collided with a bus that did not see it signalling. When a Tesla car on autopilot crashed and killed its owner in the United States, it sparked a Federal investigation. The Tesla crash, where the car collided with a trailer crossing the road, was likely because the car's sensors couldn't tell the white side of a trailer apart from the blank space of the sky, and failed to stop in time.

So it is with the Swiss shuttle. The slow-moving vehicles (traveling no faster than 20 kms) can carry up to 11 passengers and are monitored remotely. The crash as it was, appears to be minor - the kind of error that would be wholly unsurprising with a student driver, yet stands out thanks to the technology involved.