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ST. 70 YEARS OLD.



It is said that time does not stand still for any man, but surely we seem to know of some exceptions. There is ST., for instance, the popular and well beloved Editor of this paper, who celebrated yesterday his 70th birthday, yet we can hardly believe this to be true. He continues to be sprightly (in Bernese tempo) and debonnair, looking well and working hard; in fact, he remains the same ST., who for years has always been welcome in every sphere of our Colony, as he is welcome in every corner of Switzerland itself. The reason for this is not far to seek, for has not ST. during his 30 years as Editor of THE SWISS OBSERVER faithfully recorded every event of note that took place in the home country and over here? Often he has done so in moving terms, bringing back nostalgic memories or making the heart beat faster in patriotic fervour, for his pen can depict in simple language what so strongly appeals to us and goes straight to our hearts.

As it is ten years since this paper gave its readers some particulars about ST.'s career, it may not be out of place to recall at least some of them as, for one thing, memories tend to be short these hectic days and, for another, let us assume and hope that many new readers may have joined us since June 1949.

Mr. Alfred Stauffer was born on June 25th 1889 in the proud and beautiful Capital of Switzerland, Berne, the twin son of Mr. E. Stauffer, Managing Director of the then Banque Fédérale of that City. After a happy childhood he entered the elementary schools of Berne, graduating first to the *Progymnasium* and later to the *Gymnasium* there. After he finished his schooling, ST. entered as a young man an industrial apprenticeship in Berne, during which he acquired the

Diploma of the S.K.V. and then emigrated to Paris, which saw him for the next 3 years.

Appropriately enough he made his début in London on our National Day, August 1st 1912, and this great Metropolis has sheltered him ever since, except for the time when ST. rejoined the Colours in the First World War, during 1914/15, serving as Corporal in Bat. 25 at the 'Grenzbesetzung'. On his return to London he resumed his commercial activities in the City, as well as those in the Colony, where he then already played a prominent part.

We have often heard ST. say that the Swiss Mercantile Society was his first love in London, to which he has most certainly remained true and faithful. Having served that Society first as Hon. Secretary during 1916 and then as President during 1917/18, he was made an Hon. Member in 1922 and he retains his attachment to this day, his views and opinions still carrying great weight. ST.'s considerable experience in the Colony led him to other Offices, in which his sagacity and common sense were much appreciated. During 1920/21 he acted as Hon. Secretary of the City Swiss Club, which later on again claimed his services as a member of the Committee for no less than 15 years (1933/47). Unfortunately his modesty forbade him to accept the Presidency of the City Swiss Club, which would have been only too happy seeing him act in that capacity. However, in recognition of his long and meritorious services he was elected a *Membre Honoraire* in April 1957 and everyone was happy at the conferment of this great distinction on our good friend.

ST. also acted as Vice-President of the Swiss Choral Society (now the Swiss Male Choir) during 1931/32 and besides served on many other Committees, such as the 1st August, Swiss Sports, etc., where his opinions and suggestions were listened to with unflinching attention and were frequently acted upon. Still, all these manifold activities brought neither grist to his personal mill, nor butter to his bread. He, therefore, pressed forward in his commercial career, occupying various positions in a number of City concerns.

The year that affects us most as regular readers of this paper is 1929, when ST. was invited by its Founder, Publisher and at one time Editor, the late Mr. P. F. Boehringer, to assume the post of Editor in succession to Dr. H. W. Egli. Though not academically trained as a Journalist, he had an obvious flair for the Press and already during his school days he edited the Magazine of the 'Handelsabteilung des Staedtischen Gymnasium' in Berne. Subsequently he wrote articles for various Swiss Local Papers for several years, which goes to show how Mr. Boehringer came to pick his man of the easy flowing pen.

And now it is 30 years since ST. has acted in the capacity of Editor, during which this paper has been enlarged and improved in countless ways and has become indispensable, as friend and guide, to the majority of those making up the Swiss Colony in London and the country as a whole. The work of an Editor, onerous at all times, proves especially so when a paper is small, like THE SWISS OBSERVER, with a restricted circulation and limited financial resources. It throws a most unfair burden on his shoulders and taxes his ability and activity to the limit. Though ST. must often feel harassed, he never shows it, but manages to retain his Olympian calm, a gift no doubt

of his Bernese temperament. He fully deserves our unstinted admiration for his unfailing good temper and his homely humour with which he chronicles current events. Positively countless must be his records on meetings, dinners, banquets, lectures, concerts, dances and social functions of every kind. He couches in becoming language accounts of Christenings, Weddings and Funerals and puts in a personal appearance whenever he can.

ST., however, is not content with his recordings and often gets permission to reprint topical articles which he feels will be of interest to his readers. Also the pages of his 'Commercial News' have been considerably enlarged and are always full of interesting items, many of which make us feel proud of the achievements of our home country.

Although it is no easy thing to please Swiss readers, who are generally well informed and inclined to be critical, ST. commands the admiration and goodwill of his countless friends. His great ability and flexible mind are the inspiration of most that the 'S.O.' brings before its readers; yet the Editor is the first to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Publisher, the Advisory Council, his collaborators and the printing staff. To all of them he wishes to express his most sincere admiration and his warmest thanks.

It is pleasing to report that, in spite of his constant activity at Leonard Street and in the Colony at large, his 'Private Life' is as happy as it ever has been. Fortunately Mrs. Stauffer has always taken the greatest and kindest interest in all her husband's work and is a wonderful helpmate to him. She almost invariably accompanies ST. on all his important missions and finds herself as welcome as is her spouse.

Mrs. Stauffer is another one of those fortunate people for whom time appears to stand still. She looks as well and young as she did years ago and always as if she had just stepped out of a bandbox. There is little doubt that ST. and his dear wife are looking after each other in the best possible manner, which seems to be at least part of the secret why both of them keep happy and young looking. For this we might almost envy them, if we did not like them so much and esteem them so highly.

It has been mentioned that at the outbreak of the First World War ST. rejoined the Colours of his old Infantry Battalion. The Second War in 1939 found him over age for a like purpose, but the then Minister of the Swiss Legation, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, invited him to join the 'Special Division' under Monsieur Preiswerk. During that time the late Mr. P. F. Boehringer again took over the Editorship of the 'S.O.', but ST. kept in close and active touch, which enabled him to resume his old position as Editor without difficulty in 1945 and which he has retained to this day. Thus, as our readers will observe, ST. is still in full harness at an age at which most of his contemporaries live blithely in retirement. It will be a sad day for the 'S.O.' and for the Colony at large when the Editor should finally decide to follow suit, by laying down his pen and what Comedian Jack

Warner would call 'his blue pencil'. Let us hope that day may not dawn for at least another few years to come, but when it does, ST. can rest assured of a well earned respite after many years of the greatest and most valuable service to the Swiss Colony in this country and its cohesion with and attachment to our beloved homeland.

Let us hope that this article has given the readers of the 'S.O.' at least a brief outline of the Editor's personality and his fine character. His hard work and painstaking workmanship, his ability to inform and move us, his genial self and excellent company have long endeared him to all who read this paper or who have the good fortune of being numbered amongst his personal friends. A more helpful, loyal and valued friend than ST. it is impossible to find, nor a better Swiss, whom most of us can take as a shining example.

By a happy coincidence THE SWISS OBSERVER will on the occasion of ST.'s 70th birthday be able to celebrate its own 40th anniversary. This we believe is termed in racing parlance 'a double event'; however, as the 'S.O.' has never had any connection with the Sport of Kings, we prefer to call it a lucky double celebration. At all events, the readers will notice that ST. has served this paper with diligence and faithfulness for three-quarters of the time of its existence.

There only remains for us to offer ST. our united warm and heartfelt BEST WISHES on his great day. In this everyone will join with real pleasure, whether he or she may come from the Allemanic parts, the Suisse Romande or the sunny Ticino, for ST. speaks for us all and to us all, representing the whole of Switzerland like no one else (H.E. The Swiss Ambassador excepted).

May his future remain bright and happy, may he be blessed with good health and strength, may he continue to speak to us through the columns of THE SWISS OBSERVER and may MANY HAPPY RETURNS be vouchsafed to them both. These are the fervent hopes and wishes of us all.

* * *

We greet you well on this important day,
Wishful to find a tribute that is due
In gratitude for all we owe to you,
But which we do not know how to repay.

Your 'savoir faire', your touch how to array
The news which we are eager to pursue,
— One knows that all the 'S.O.' says is true —
Means more to most of us than we can say.

This anniversary thus makes us glad
And we rejoice that you will carry on
The great task started thirty years ago.

There is just one thing that we want to add:—
HEARTFELT BEST WISHES, thanks for
work well done;
Long may your pen continue yet to flow!

'GALLUS'.

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