

# Joseph Christen

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# OBITUARIES

*Fred G. Sommer*

As we announced in our last issue, Mr. Fred G. Sommer, of 3 The Chestnuts, 66 Harestone Valley Road, Caterham, Surrey, died at his home on 24th June. He had been suffering from hardening of the arteries and had been under doctors' care since early 1976. For the last ten weeks of his life he was confined to his bed.

With his death, the Swiss community in England loses one of its great personalities, a man who always had the good of his country and his fellow-compatriots at heart.

Frederick Godfrey Sommer was born in Berne on 1st March 1892. He was educated at the *Progymnasium* at Burgdorf and then joined an iron foundry as commercial apprentice. On completion of the apprenticeship and after gaining the Diploma of the Swiss Mercantile Society, he entered the then Academy of Commercial Science in Berne, passing the final examination with honours.

He spent one year with a bank and three years with a manufacturing concern in Florence, followed by two years with Sulzer Brothers in Winterthur.

In 1916, Fred Sommer came to Britain and at the early age of 24 was entrusted with considerable responsibility. He became not only Accountant but Company Secretary of A. Wander Ltd, London, and he was a Fellow of both the Institute of Company Accountants and the Faculty of Corporate Secretaries.

From an early age he took great interest in the affairs of the Swiss community in London. He was a member of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, the City Swiss Club and the Swiss Mercantile Society of which he became a Trustee. He held the office of President of the Swiss Benevolent Society with distinction and had previously been President of the Foyer Suisse and the Swiss Male Choir, as well as Vice-President of the Swiss Hostel for Girls and the Consistoire of the Swiss Church. He was one of the founders of the German-speaking Swiss Church in London, and during the war, he resolutely took charge when there was no Minister and held regular Sunday services. He was also connected with the Swiss Young Men's Christian Association. In other words, Fred Sommer was a pillar of strength and responsibility in the life of the Swiss community, ably assisted by his wife Anna.

Fred and Anna had known each other since childhood and got married in 1918. They were a most devoted couple and, in the opinion of their son and daughter, model parents — if they had

any differences they were never ventilated in front of the children, and neither of them ever heard a cross word between them. Mrs. Sommer and the family (they have three grandchildren and two great-grand-children) now mourn the death of a wonderful husband and father, and it is to them that our deepest sympathy goes in their bereavement.

We shall remember Fred Sommer not only as a staunch patriot and indefatigable worker, but as the Rev. Terence Perry said at the Funeral Service at the United Reformed Church at Caterham on 29th June, as a man of integrity and a friend. The large congregation testified to this — not only was the Wander Company well represented, but the Swiss Church and the many Swiss societies with which Fred Sommer had been connected. And there were many of his friends. He had been proud of his many achievements and his successes, but they had never made him arrogant or vain. And even those who did not always see eye to eye with him, felt respect for him as a man of principles. He was a perfectionist, and this showed also in his hobby as a handyman about the house. He took pride in doing a professional job as cabinet maker. Though he was not a keen sportsman, he loved horse riding, even after his retirement, and he was a steady driver — 55 years on the road.

Now he rests in peace, and he well deserves it. His wife and family will find consolation in the sympathy and affection expressed by such large numbers of friends. Our sincere wishes are with them.

MM.

*Joseph Christen*

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Mr. Joseph Christen, of Oberwil, Zug. He died on 11th July, at the age of 88. He was one of the early skiing pioneers and came to London in 1916. He was manager of the New Corn Exchange Restaurant in Mark Lane and became Steward of the "Schweizerbund" in Charlotte Street. After six years, he was elected President of the Club as well as President of the Swiss Gymnastic Society. He was badly injured when his house was bombed in 1941. After his recovery, he became caretaker with Heddon Smith's, a position he held until he was well past 70. In the mid-sixties he returned to Switzerland where he spent the last years of his life. We extend sincere condolences to his family and friends.

MM.

# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

The following readers will celebrate their birthdays in September: Mr. C. Fairweather will be 87 on 7th of the month, and Mr. J. G. Michel will have his 69th birthday on the 8th. Mr. E. Ulmann will be 74 on 9th of September, and Mrs. N. Towers will be 79 on 10th of the month. The Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Mr. Marcel Ney, will have his birthday on 19th September, and Mrs. K. Lamont will be 92 on 21st September. Mr. W. B. Sigerist (Territet, Vaud) will be 86 on 23rd September, and Mr. M. Rothlisberger will be 78 on 25th of the month.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Humbel will be celebrating their 39th wedding anniversary on 24th September.

Best wishes and congratulations to all these readers, as well as to any others who are celebrating birthdays and anniversaries within the next few weeks.

## Money man to retire

Mr. Th. von Speyr, who has been manager of the Swiss Bank Corporation's London office since 1964, will be retiring on 31st December.

Further details of Mr. von Speyr's career with the bank will appear in a later edition of the *Swiss Observer*.

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