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THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR - Paul Russenberger

Things like unhatched chickens come to mind. . .

One of the problems of running a Society like ours with a printed journal is that it has to be finalised some time before it is published. That was why I confidently wrote about the "enclosed" calendar in my last thoughts and my confidence was not entirely justified. It is my sincere hope that by the time you read this you will have received your copy with an enclosed note explaining what had happened. The trouble is that in order to meet the very necessary editorial deadline for "Swiss Express" to appear at the start of the month of publication, I have to email this piece to the Editor some 6 weeks before publication at the latest.

Actually the delay has had one encouraging effect. I have received a long series of emails, and I understand I am not the only Committee member in this situation, pointing out that a calendar had not been enclosed with their "Swiss Express" as I had suggested it should. The gratifying thing is to discover that you actually read what I write. It is encouraging and I sincerely thank you.

One email I received also asked if those who work for the Society "behind the scenes" are ever thanked. It is time now to thank all those who have again given their time and efforts towards the running of the Society. I am grateful to you all. I would like to thank the Committee, the Officers of the Society and all those who have contributed, whether centrally or in a branch, for the work they have put in over the past year. For a Society of this size to run at all, let alone smoothly, requires that all those involved do their part responsibly.

Previously, I have deliberately avoided singling out any individual or group, lest it appear that their contribution is more appreciated than that of others. This time I am going to make an exception and take the risk of mentioning, in no particular order, two unsung heroes who have done some very unseen work. Alan Mackie and his team in Scotland have so promptly stuffed envelopes with "Swiss Express" and formed a vital link in the chain between contributors and readers. John Stokes has managed the subscriptions to "Eisenbahn Amateur" and fielded the reactions from subscribers to shortcomings in the postal services that were totally outside his control. His taking the minutes at the Society's Annual General Meeting is not so unseen, but it has eased the demands on the Secretary.

Yes, the AGM, it had to come up, even though it is 5 months away as I write this! It is constitutionally necessary and not an evil. It is *your* AGM. At times, the Committee has been accused of being self-congratulatory and self-perpetuating. Any fly, which happened to be on the wall during a Committee meeting, would soon dispel the former idea. That there was an election at the 2004 AGM disproves the latter. Possibly the most important part of the AGM is the election of the Society Officers and Members who form the Committee. Could you be one? Can you think of another member who would be suitable? It is up to you.

Lastly, I wish you all a Joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year as we go forward to the Society's Silver Jubilee.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

The omission of the calendar as an insert with the September edition of Swiss Express has once again highlighted a problem. Not including an additional last minute insert to explain that the calendar was not available made it inevitable that there would be a large number of queries regarding the whereabouts of the said calendar. Members obviously believed that their insert had been omitted and, quite rightly, wanted the calendar to be forwarded to them. Many members appeared unsure as to who they should get in touch with. All queries re the non arrival of *Swiss Express*, omission of inserts, incorrect labelling and distribution problems must be directed to the membership secretary - by telephone, email, post or even personal contact! The reason for this is simply that the membership secretary prints all SRS labels and holds all spare copies of magazines and inserts for the current year. This means that should you have a problem regarding the magazine it can be dealt with quickly by the membership secretary and without having to needlessly involve other people. By all means, please contact other members of the Committee when necessary and the editor would be delighted to hear from you regarding anything relating to the contents etc of *Swiss Express*.