

Editorial : the third age...

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Editorial

The third age....

Like some of you, that have already done so, my Wife and myself have recently joined the ranks of Senior Citizens. School friends in the 'old country', Switzerland, have done so as well and want us to join them in a reunion-celebration later in the year. It sure is a milestone to reach the magic age that allows us to call ourselves superannuitant, Pensioners or simply retired!

Should we be sad, since youth and middle-age are but a thing of the past? Should we accept this 'fact-of-life' with pride since we can now boast of 65 years of life-experience?

And just as we decided on the latter, our youngest daughter declared that looking in the mirror the other day she found a white hair on her head.

And that reminded me of a nostalgic song I used to sing with the first lines; *Darling I am growing old, silverthreads among the gold, shine across my brow today, life is fading fast away.....!* -

According to a recent article from Switzerland we should never think of fading life when reaching the 'golden age of a Pensioners'. It states the following;

*The age between 65 and 79 is not old age anymore, it is **the third age**, and a positive time for most people. A new survey by the Swiss National Research Foundation says a quiet revolution has been taking*

place among the lives of retired people.

The survey looked at the situation of older people in cantons Geneva and Valais between 1979 and 1994 and found that increasing numbers were living healthy active lives until the age of 80.

"We're living in amazing times", said Francois Hoepflinger, coordinator of the survey. "40 per cent of people born in 1940 can expect to celebrate their 90th birthdays." The survey found widespread improvements in the quality of life for older people. Those under 80 are healthier, wealthier and more active than 15 years ago. "The fact is, the aging process is being postponed," said Professor Christian Lalive d'Epinay of Geneva University's department of gerontology. (The scientific study of aging) "Biologists believe human life is possible up until the age of about 120, and we're getting close and closer to that limit."

The survey found that life for the over 80's in Switzerland had improved too, but not so radically as for younger people. Around 20 per cent of people in advanced old age live in special homes, and suffer from serious illness. But the outlook for the next generation of people reaching the age of 80 is positive; Hoepflinger and d'Epinay expect their quality of life to improve, reflecting the healthier, more active lifestyle they will have enjoyed in their 60s and 70s.

The big question is how big a financial burden the increasing numbers of retired people will place on the working taxpayer

Franncois Hoepflinger believes the Swiss should not be too concerned. "Firstly we are a rich country with the resources to deal with this, and secondly many retired people play roles that benefit the economy: they look after grandchildren so that parents can work, or they are active in voluntary organizations." Overall the survey shows that there is less to fear from getting older than many people had imagined. Although old age comes to us all eventually, in the year 2000 the problems of old age are arriving later, and more and more people are enjoying active healthy lives up to the age of 80.

Most of these statements from our 'country of origin will also apply to Kiwis and Swiss/Kiwis in NZ, al-

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though the assurance of continuing national-superannuation payments may be somewhat shakier here than in Switzerland. (In February the Swiss Federal Council was working on draft legislation to secure the financial basis of AHV until 2010). - How many 'over 80-year-old Swiss/Kiwis' are among us, do you think? Would be interesting to know!

Editor.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Once again, we are rapidly heading towards the end of our financial year, so I recently spent some time checking our membership records. This caused me to have a closer look as to where our Society stands. In our communities, there is a great variety of Clubs and voluntary organisations, all of which require a healthy and solid membership base to exist - and the Swiss Society is no exception.

During the course of a year, in any organisation, it is inevitable that some members, for a variety of reasons, are lost. So, to counterbalance this, new ones must be gained, preferably in higher numbers than the losses. Of course, it is the "gaining" side of this equation which proves to be the more difficult task! In looking back as far as the 1996/97 year, our Society membership has fortunately steadily been increasing. Four years ago we have approx. 490 members (households). Now we have approx. 530 members, so the *net* increase stands at about 40.

A major reason for this increase is because the Society is taking a proactive approach - we are "marketing" ourselves to attract and gain new members in a number of ways.

Undoubtedly, the Web-site on the Internet, set up by Edi Brändli in Auckland, has helped many people "discover" us. All responses are forwarded to the appropriate Club, or to me for the Society.

A second source of new members is new immigrants. When the Swiss Embassy receives a new registration, they send out, on our behalf, a Society subscription form. This assistance by the Embassy is most appreciated.

Many times, I have also been given or found names of Swiss residents in New Zealand, or by chance met people, who are often unaware of

SWISS SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2000

The Auckland Swiss Club would like to cordially invite all Swiss Clubs, and Swiss Society members, from throughout New Zealand, to attend the 2000 Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Swiss Society, to be held at the Club House, Rapson Road, Kaukapakapa, Auckland, on Sunday, 4th June. Prior to this, on the Sunday morning, two Clubs will also take part in the final of the annual inter-club 'Cowbell Competition'.

The Meeting will then be followed by a "Folklore Evening" at the Alexander Park Racecourse, Auckland - including a Buffet Dinner, and featuring the Swiss Kiwi Yodel Group for some enthralling entertainment.

We extend a warm welcome to all Club and Society members from around the country - North and South - and encourage you to mark Queen's Birthday Weekend in your diaries for a visit to our beautiful city, **Auckland**.

For further information and transport / accommodation arrangements, please contact your local Club or Society representatives. More details will be provided in the next *Helvetia* issue.

TF & BL

the existence of our Society or local Clubs, and are interested to join.

But no matter how a name reaches us, a detailed letter describing the Society and Clubs is always sent out, together with some recent spare copies of this magazine, to inform these people about us. This method of approach has been very successful. However, the challenge of finding new members never ends - and the bigger the membership base we have, the easier it becomes to keep individual subscription costs down.

As well, membership is also not restricted to just Swiss citizens or descendants. Rule 3.b. also allows for "persons who are of a friendly disposition towards Switzerland" to become financial members upon approved application, although with a few restrictions - including not being able to hold any office, or not being eligible for any financial support.

So if anyone does know or meets any Swiss Citizens living in New Zealand, and they are not yet members, please tell them about our organisation, and let me know so that I am able to contact them to introduce them to the Society per-

sonally. This also applies to someone who has some specific affiliation to Switzerland, or may also have spent some time living there.

At the top of this page there is an invitation from the Auckland Club to attend the Society's AGM in early June. I would also like to encourage as many people as possible to attend - as well as to remind everyone that this weekend is open to **all** Society members, and is not limited to only Club members. A reminder also that any remits to the AGM must be received by 15th April, in time for inclusion in the agenda, which will be published in the May *Helvetia*. My best wishes to everyone for the months and kind regards, Beatrice.



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