

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 57 (1991)
Heft: [7]

Rubrik: Annual General Meeting : June 2, 1991 : at the clubhouse of the Wellington Club : presidents report

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★ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ★

JUNE 2, 1991

at the Clubhouse of the
WELLINGTON CLUB

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I start my report with the sad news first. During the past year the following members have passed away: Mary Hiestand, Taranaki; Molly Chamberlain, Taranaki; Doug Meier, Taranaki; Christine Seifert, formerly of Taranaki; Ida Bernold, Taranaki. (Ida was a foundation and an honorary member of the Swiss Society).

The happier news is that the Society is at the moment in very good shape financially and has a sound foundation. We have not been called upon for assistance but I would remind the clubs that it is up to them to look out for any member that is deserving of the Society's help. We are first and foremost a Benevolent Society.

Membership during the year has, unfortunately declined, it is however not a problem peculiar to New Zealand only, and on my recent travels to the United States I met some Swiss that had similar tales to tell regarding their clubs and societies. It is a sign of the times with younger people shifting around much more than was the case with the older generations. I feel however that the hard core of the Society is still a coherent unit and considering the wide spread of our membership, geographically, I am satisfied that the Society is still in good health.

Looking back over the past year, and especially over the last few months, the Society has been inundated with offers of souvenir sales in connection with the 700 years celebrations, offers to take part in ethnic and cultural activities, etc. As the Society is made up of clubs I sorted out relevant information and passed them on to the individual clubs. One item I would like to single out for comment, since some criticism was directed at the Society, regarding the organisation for the visit of the Swiss Folklore Group from Fribourg. I received a request for assistance from Mr Grapl, President of the Oceania Cultural Organisation. I advised him to get in touch directly with the individual clubs with all the information. A letter I received from Dr Cyrill Renz in Switzerland stated that the Folklore Group would pay their own cost for the international travel. All other costs: travel through the country, food and accommodation, visits of the official programme are paid by the organisers of the host country. In addition the organisers would pay each artist a daily pocket money the equivalent of 5 US Dollars. It clearly was the responsibility of the Oceania Cultural Group to provide the Folklore Group with all the necessities. As it then turned out Mr Grapl tried to offload these responsibilities to the Swiss Community. It is to the credit of all the participating clubs that fed, washed, rested and transported the performers while they stayed in their areas. They made them welcome to the best of their ability at such short notice, and indeed the opinion was that such groups will in future be most welcome provided they come minus Mr Grapl! I have subsequently received a letter from Dr Cyrill Renz, thanking the Society for the support they received while in New Zealand and that the visit brought to them an interesting experience and some unforgettable moments. If I picture the bus they travelled in, I concede the trips must indeed have been unforgettable.

It was very pleasing to find an enthusiastic interest for the Jass-Weltmeisterschaft. Two teams of 40 players each took part. One team alone was made up from the Hamilton club. I would like to thank Emanuel Züst for organising this event. It involved a lot of work, especially as the competitors were drawn from every corner of the country. The fee for this event must have been acceptable to all participants as the prizes for the winners looked very attractive. Emanuel has informed the Society that there is even a surplus in the account and a statement will be sent in due course to all clubs together with a refund. The clubs can use this as they see fit. To the two winners, Jakob Glauser of Auckland and Uli Elmiger of Hamilton our congratulations. We also wish them well when they compete at the finals in Beckenried-Klewenalp. Competition will be

fierce as between 600 and 800 participants will be competing. The four finalists will play on the Rutliwiese on the evening of August 10. Shall we see one of our two winners among those last four?

We thank Glenn Hedley of Swissair for supplying the very attractive cover for the February Helvetia. It was a special issue to start the 700 years celebrations and also coincided with 60 years of Swissair.

We are looking back on a year of close contact with the Embassy of Switzerland. Thanks go to our Ambassador and the staff of the Embassy for the support we received in informing the Swiss community of official happenings. Also for the continuing link between the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad and the Society for the local contents in the Swiss Review and the continued supply of extra copies for our members that are not registered at the Embassy. The Society in turn pledges it's full support to the Embassy in its endeavour to widen the relationship between Switzerland and New Zealand.

The cowbell competitions are still a good way of fostering contact between the clubs. This year was no exception and a good time was had by all the people that came down to Wellington this year from Taranaki and measured their skills in friendly competition and cemented old friendships. I hope the same was true between the Auckland and Hamilton clubs. An added element of interest will be a desire to be the first club to possess the brand new cowbell donated by Arthur Muller of Auckland.

A few credits are due to the following people that have helped with the smooth running of the Society's affairs. To Ivan Sutherland, husband of Lina our secretary, for the assistance he gave Lina during the year and also setting up the programme to do the accounts. And to Stanley Goodright, Lina's brother-in-law for setting up the balance sheet and auditing the accounts. It was truly a family effort. Thanks to my committee. Thanks to the printers in Stratford and all the advertisers that make the printing of our vital club-link possible.

In closing I thank the Wellington Club for hosting this Annual General Meeting and organising the festivities that will follow to celebrate 700 years of Switzerland. And a big thank you to the club presidents for the effort they made to get so many people together despite this year's difficulties in view of the great exodus that takes place to visit the old homeland.

My best wishes go to all members, whatever their plans for the year may be: a trip to Switzerland or just getting together for friendly socialising in their adopted homeland.



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3961

die richtige entscheidung

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