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Editorial

Once again it is the time of the year when lots of our Swiss compatriots return from a visit to the old country, Switzerland. If I had been among the "Lucky-ones" and if I was asked about my most favoured activity while in Switzerland, I probably would answer as in the past, that it was the travelling on the Swiss federal railway system. My earliest memories of train travel in Switzerland go back to pre-world-war times and the fascination with this orderly and disciplined railway technology has never left me and maybe you feel the same way?

-One of the most frequent answers for Swiss toddlers of my days, to the question of future activity in life, would have been the profession of train-locomotive-driver. I guess, a case of "many are called, few are

chosen"!

And now the Swiss federal railway is celebrating 150 years of its existence with the re-run of the return-journey Zürich - Baden, the so-called Spanisch-Brötli-Bahn.

On 7. August 1847 (according to history books), some 140 passengers travelled the 23 kilometre distance in 3 passenger coaches and in a record time of 35 minutes. Of course today's trains need only half the travelling time and the meaning of the nick-name "Spanisch-Brötli-Bahn" may have to be explained. It appears that the well-to-do people of Zürich of the 1840th were very fond of the spanish bread-buns made of puffy pastry by the bakers of Baden. So the start of the train service between Zürich and Baden proved ideal for the delivery of this delicacy and hence the nick-name "Spanish-Brötli-Bahn" with the same initials

SBB as the federal railway (Schweizerische Bundes Bahn) uses to this day.

If we were to undertake a study of the history of Swiss railways, we would probably discover that our country of origin was late in adopting the railway technology compared with the surrounding countries. The topographical character of the countryside with high mountains and low lying valleys made it a daunting task to plan a rail-network, I presume. The Swiss have traditionally been a conservative lot and some may even have believed the warning from a medical expert of that time, that on-lookers would risk brain disease!!!! - Well we know better now, but one of my memories of early train travel is of hard wooden seats, lots of metal-grinding-noise and an enamelled notice with black writing below the window sills saying in German, French and Italian - "Do not lean out of the window" - and of course that's what we most liked to do, especially on the ever so popular School excursions.

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President's Message

The Society sports' medals for 1997 have arrived, and most have already been presented to the lucky winners at recent First of August celebrations, which I have heard, were all very well attended. Having had a preview of all the medal winners, it's great to see the large increase of participation amongst our junior members - my congratulations go to all these youngsters, both participants and medal recipients alike.

Thank you to all those "Society only" members who have paid their annual subs - the response has been excellent, with only about 30% now outstanding. I extend my appreciation to everyone who included small notes and messages of support, both to myself, as well as to the new Society organisation. They were a delight to receive. And to all new members of either a Club or to the Society - welcome!

In early August, I was in Christchurch for the weekend, so whilst there, I found it to be a perfect opportunity to contact the Christchurch Club. I met with Wilma and Ralph Junker, with whom I had a lovely dinner and an enjoyable evening. Unfortunately, I missed out