

Member's profile : Max Bachmann

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Max Bachmann

It's 49 years this month that Max Bachmann has been in New Zealand. And he doesn't think there is much to tell. But once he starts chatting over a cup of coffee and a delicious home made (by Max himself!) cake, the story gets bigger, and more and more exciting.

Born on 24th January 1921 he grew up in Rütli, ZH, where his father ran a butcher store.

He followed in his father's footsteps and specialised in sausage making, and worked for many years as a store manager for Bell, the big Zurich meat chain. At the end of the war he got to know 11 New Zealand ex prisoners of war, interned near Wald in a big camp, and the tales of their homeland intrigued him. At the age of 30, with his young wife Elisabeth, from Mädiswil, BE, and his first two daughters, Verena and Elisabeth, he made his way to Genoa and sailed via Australia to New Zealand, where the only resident he knew of, Rita Imhof, came to meet them at the wharf. He found work easily in his trade, where his skills of making sausages soon became an asset to the New Zealand population while he worked for the major meat producers/processors in Auckland.

Their family grew over the years, to five daughters, Verena, Elisabeth, Suzanne, Christine and Greta.

The family home was established in Blockhouse Bay two years after arrival in New Zealand. This became the cradle of the Swiss Club, as the Swiss congregated there regularly, and just about every Swiss immigrant who arrived in the country at that time was cared for and transported, or childminded by the Bachmanns. The Bachmann home became the melting pot of the Swiss community, the meeting point, the extended family for the immigrants.

The meetings were gradually formalised, minutes were taken, and naturally Max Bachmann emerged as the president of the newly formed club.

He also played an instrumental part in the purchase and establishment of the property at Kaukapakapa in 1965.

In 1977 Max opened a shop in Blockhouse Bay called "Continental



*Max Bachmann and his family;
f.l.to r. Suzanne, Verena, Max, Greta and husband Ross, Christine
and Elisabeth*

Sausages". The Vienna Foods brand can be widely attributed to the creativity of Max Bachmann, and became an important export arm of the New Zealand meat industry, with a strong presence at Expo 70 in Japan, where 21 tons of goods, mainly salami, were delivered in support of their stand.

Max retired from the workforce in 1981, and took his wife and two youngest daughters on a seven-month world trip, which took them to Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, China, Russia, Switzerland, all around Europe, and America. On their return, upon reflection concluding that they were glad to have made their home in New Zealand, they bought a sheep and cattle farm in Clevedon

„where they remained until 1996. Elisabeth Bachmann, his wife, sadly passed away in 1987, and Max now resides in Howick, in a very welcoming home, where he still keeps an alert eye on his large, growing family which includes 15 grandchildren and one great grandchild, and everything that goes on in the world. He is also very involved in all the activities in the Swiss Club, and is an important source of information for the committee. Thank you, Max, for your pioneering contributions to us as Swiss immigrants and the wider New Zealand community, and we hope we can come to you for your wisdom and advice, and the odd cake.
(thank you to Trudi Fill for this contribution - Ed.)



This photo was taken at the Hamilton Swiss Club picnic at Mercer in approx. 1960 (?) - a youthful Max Bachmann at the barbecue.