

Memories are history

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We hope you enjoyed the first two instalments of Rinaldo's "Memories are History"; here is the last one.

We'd like to encourage all our readers to share their memories with us. How did you live in Switzerland? What did you know about New Zealand? What made you decide to come? tb

Exams...

In primary school we received the Zeugnis (exam results) half yearly. The Zeugnis had to be presented to mother or father, for better or worse. This most revered or hated, as the case might have been, document had to be signed by a parent and returned to school.

Exam-day was usually a day of trepidation. Since there were parents, the inspector and Schulräte (members of the Board of Trustees) present, we knew well that the teacher wanted us to give well-informed answers to all his questions and that we should perform miracles on the blackboard.

Usually the end of the lessons on those days brought a blessed release and the joy of receiving a 'Püürli with Salander', (a bread bun with a cheaper version of Cervelat), as a general reward for our efforts of the day....!

Of course in those days the emphasis was on reading, writing, arithmetics, religious learning and singing. The latter subject was dear to our heart, since we enjoyed singing at home, in the family - as did most people then. Our motto was: Never mind if you can't afford an instrument; you always have your voice with you and can sing.

When the time of emigration with my parents came, in 1956, I duly packed my school song book, and I still enjoy singing some of the more familiar tunes.

I am sorry to say that we had very little sporting activities during our school years. One hour per week was on our timetable, and it consisted mainly of run-

ning, jumping in all variations and playing 'Völkerball', a ball game with the intent to either hit your opponents with the ball, or to avoid being hit. As for extra physical activities, there was no need whatsoever since most school age children had plenty of work at home and on their parents' farm. Swimming was regarded as an exotic sport, and few learnt the art in the shallow but fast running and cold river Thur.

Milk woes

It was fortunate (or unlucky, from my point of view) that the Käserei (the local village milk distribution centre) was right next to the schoolhouse in the village of Neu St. Johann, so we young boys of school age had to carry the milk-can on our back to the Käserei, mornings and nights. The trick was not to forget to carry the empty can home again at midday so it was available for the evening milk. The financial returns from milk supplied (approx. 12 to 20 Litres per milk-ing) was the staple income for our family.

In this way our trip to school became most important, and woe to me as once I tipped the can out over my head spilling the milk all over the road because I rode a pushbike on the downhill run to the Käserei, a forbidden practice....!

I clearly remember the winter's day when I gave way to the temptation of riding down to the village on a sleigh instead of walking with the milk-can on my back, with the school bag under my arm. Reaching a small bridge over a brook and coming to a sudden stop my milk-can dislodged from my back and all the milk (and therefore half a day's family income) poured into the water and disappeared, washed down in front of my eyes. - Little wonder that I didn't learn much during that morning's lessons since I constantly visualised myself standing before my father at midday, unable to an-

swer his question 'how many litres did you have?'..!

Schulreise

As I mentioned before, one of the highlights of the school year was the Schulreise (annual outing) with the teacher and the whole complement of pupils of the school. Little did we know in early years how painful rather than joyful these yearly occasions were for our parents. Such school trips consisted usually of a short train or postal car journey, and as they were not fully funded by the Education Department it meant that a small portion of the travelling costs had to be met by parents. And there was the extra difficulty that we had to bring provisions for the day. No need for drinks, we were told, since there would be fountains in various places along the way. What happy laughter around a fountain in a village square or around the welcome cattle troughs with ice cold running water high up on an alp! What a lot of singing on the way home from the destination of the day!

The only real negative part of school excursions was that we'd have to write an Aufsatz (essay) the following day at school.

For me the six years of primary schooling came to an end in 1947, and the really serious part of school education started with an exam of approval to enter the Realschule Nesslau, the secondary school for three years. Religious considerations had to stand aside and we thirteen-year-olds from the Convent school were allowed, by necessity, to attend the secondary school with Protestant affiliation. Only with the 'Realschule' was it possible to reach the standard of education demanded by the state authorities of St. Gallen to get a 'Staatsstelle' later in life, i.e. to find employment with the Post Office or Railways. Life took a new turn and growing up became more serious. But that is another story.

Rinaldo Rust