

# Obituaries : Heidi Black

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## Obituaries



### Eric Nicolaus Meuli

22 January 1924 – 8 July 2014

Born in Eltham, Taranaki, Eric was the second child to Nicolaus and Rita Meuli. Eric's father Nic was born in Nufenen (GR), immigrating to New Zealand in 1911. Eric and his siblings Olga, Betty and Nina were raised in a farming environment. Eric moved to Ohangai at the age of seven and lived on Ohangai Road throughout his life. He was schooled locally both in Ohangai and Hawera.

Eric's life-long partner was Audrey (deceased) whom he married in 1955, and together, in Ohangai, they raised four daughters, Gillian, Pauline, Denise and Erica, who in turn produced nine grandchildren.

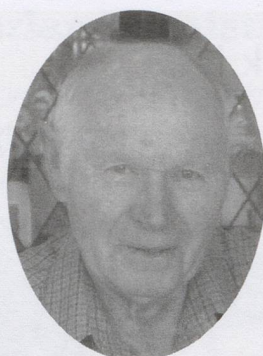
He became a member of the Taranaki Swiss Club, attending many events including the annual Swiss Picnic and card afternoons.

Eric got great joy from travelling, visiting Switzerland six times, the first in 1983, while his last visit was in 2009, at the age of 85. Eric and Audrey were always generous with their hospitality, hosting many visiting Swiss relations and visitors in Ohangai as well as exchanging Christmas and Birthday greetings on a regular basis.

The friendships he developed throughout his life, be it from his schooling, the Ohangai Community, as a relative, an international traveller or an employee were very important to Eric. He was a hardworking and very proud man and this helped shape him into the person who we remember today.

*This article was written with love by Eric's daughters.*

The Swiss Society and Clubs extend heartfelt sympathies to the families and friends concerned.



### John Arthur Kuriger

8 December 1921 – 9 June 2014

John's parents were married in Einsiedeln, Switzerland and emigrated to Oaonui, Taranaki in 1920. They had eight children; John the eldest son was born and educated at Oaonui. He left school aged 13 and stayed at home to help on the farm. At 18 he was enlisted in the army during WW11. His youngest sister, who was 4 years of age at the time, said she remembers the tall, handsome big brother in military uniform coming home on the bus. In August 1942 John was posted to go overseas but tragically his father, John, died suddenly of a heart attack. John was released from the army to take on the responsibility of helping his mother, Rosa, run the farm and raise his siblings. They had a wonderful and happy life; there was love, tears and laughter.

In 1954 John married Bertha Kalin, the second eldest of nine children. John and Bertha farmed in partnership with John's brother, Lou. Then in 1970 they sold their share to Lou and bought a farm at Manaia. John and Bertha were blessed with five children, one son and four daughters, and ended up having sixteen grandchildren and nineteen great grandchildren. So John and Bertha were never lonely, as there was always family around.

John was a hard worker and really enjoyed farming. He was also a keen sportsman playing football when he was younger, then later he enjoyed golf. John and Bertha were loyal and dedicated members of the Taranaki Swiss Club and enjoyed attending many of our functions and bus trips away. They were also hard-working committee members for many years, and we are very appreciative of their valuable and generous contribution to our club. In his youth John competed in the 'steinstossen' and had his name engraved on the trophy several times, and later they both enjoyed a good game of euchre at our card afternoons.

Thirty years ago John and Bertha retired to Hawera where they shared many happy times with their friends. However for John the last three years were spent at Trinity Home and Hospital suffering from Parkinsons. There he was always being visited by family and members of the Taranaki Swiss Club. Then on the 9th of June he passed to his eternal rest. His funeral was at St Joseph's in Hawera. Thank you very much to Othmar for organising a wonderful farewell with members of the Swiss Club forming a guard of honour and alphorn and accordion music at the grave side. Now we just have good memories of a kind and loved husband and father.



### Heidi Black

19 March 1939 – 15 May 2014

Heidi was born in Switzerland on 19 March 1939. Her upbringing was countryside village life in the region of Basel, living the seasons and having a strong connection to the land. Her early working life included modelling in Paris and secretarial work in Zurich.

In 1968, while Heidi was working as a private secretary to an executive of the Steel Company of Canada in Hamilton, Ontario, she met Peter Black, a scientist working for the then-new New Zealand Steel. They married in Auckland and moved to Waiuku, and their first child, Helen, was born towards the end of 1969. After a short time of working in Australia and Napier, New Zealand, they settled in Meadowbank in 1972 and lived there until 1984. In 1973 they had a son, Stephen.

Heidi was a devoted mother and a true friend. Her connection with Switzerland remained very strong and she travelled back and forth between New Zealand and her place of birth on a number of occasions. She passionately upheld the traditional celebrations of all the major festivals like Easter, Christmas, and Carnival, and remained an avid follower

## Swiss Snippets

of life in Switzerland through continued subscription to the "Tagesanzeiger". Her working life included working as a secretary, first in Canada and then at Auckland University.

While exploring her spirituality Heidi met Yoshi Sakurai from Japan, and they initiated a project that was in line with her ideals of environmental sustainability and respect for the land at Kaiwaka, north of Auckland. She invested a lot of time and energy into this project, and eventually built, in her own inimitable way, a small cottage for herself which she called her 'hermitage'. A lot of time was spent there in the last two years, and she derived much pleasure from the wild beauty of the place, preferring to let nature grow rather than meddle.

Music, especially classical music and a love of opera were life-long sources of pleasure and nourishment. Heidi seized every opportunity to connect with the Swiss community, especially when it was an event that had a cultural content, like movies or concerts. Heidi lived independently within a good circle of friends, took part in various language and cultural societies and studied the stars, music, anthroposophy, history, spirituality and several different languages. She was a private person who enjoyed time of solitude. Right up to the end she was determined to manage her own affairs in her own way and did just that.


Being an Oma to Aleksander and Nikolas was a delight in her later years and she got to know the boys as she and Helen exchanged visits between Auckland and Australia. Stephen and his mother have shared much in common and supported each other through their respective times of ease and ache, a real connection of spirit and being present to each other.

The Auckland Swiss club has lost a very inspirational member; our condolences go out to her family.

By Trudi Fill-Weidmann, adapted from her family's writing

Would you like to know how the Swiss in New Zealand celebrated Swiss National day 60 years ago? Then we have got just the article for you from 1954. Apart from the fact that we may seem a tiny little less patriotic about our country's birthday nowadays (maybe because we are way more connected with our home country these days due to technology) not much has changed really. However if you read the article about cars at the end of the page – everything has changed! Just imagine you would have told them about an SUV in 1954 – they would have thought you've gone coo coo... !

# HELVETIA



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GROUP NEW ZEALAND OF THE NEW HELVETIC SOCIETY

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18th YEAR. AUGUST, 1954. AUCKLAND.

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### FIRST OF AUGUST CELEBRATIONS

On Sunday, the 1st of August, our Consul, Mr. Blanchard, entertained the Wellington Colony at his home, where a very enjoyable evening was spent by all present. Due to the versatility of Mr. Hermann Schlatter, excellent piano accompaniment was provided for both yodelling and dancing, and some hitherto unknown talent came to light.

Mr. Ittensohn added a lot of life to the party with his accordion and his original idea of the Polonaise, and Mrs. Trachsel was very much admired in her attractive Swiss costume.

Arranged by the Swiss Social Club of Taranaki, the "Bundesfeier" was fittingly celebrated in Kaponga.

Approximately 300 guests attended and the evening opened with a dinner, followed by patriotic speeches and lively dancing until the early hours in the morning. The President of the Club, Mr. John Steiner, gave the visitors a hearty welcome. Some friends came from as far afield as Christchurch, Hamilton and Palmerston North. Special greetings were extended to our Consul in New Zealand, Mr. Henri Blanchard.

The Mayor of Kaponga, Mr. E. L. Abbott, expressed a warm acknowledgement of the important part the Swiss farmers performed in the development of the district. Almost without exception the old settlers, as well as the many younger men and women, proved to be hard workers, keen to succeed.

The speech which followed, delivered by Mr. W. Risi, Patron of the Club, was also much enjoyed and appreciated by the gathering.

The Consul, Mr. Blanchard, reminded the listeners that they were celebrating the very important happening in 1291 when Switzerland's independence was gained through the courage and determination of a handful of men. "If you return now to Switzerland," he said, "you would find the country more industrialised and modernised but the soul of the people still the same." The Kaponga Swiss people had been wise to settle in such a beautiful district, in a country where freedom was found and they were at home. He saw in them the same qualities their ancestors had. "I am very proud of you," said Mr. Blanchard. He had received a message from the President of the Confederation of Switzerland, Monsieur Rubattel, extending greetings to all Swiss abroad. Mr. Blanchard suggested that the gathering send a cable conveying its patriotic greetings to the President. The following telegram was despatched to Bern: "Anlaesslich Bundesfeier 300 Schweizer sind im Bezirk Taranaki vereingnet und ersuchen mich ihre Vaterlaendischen Gruesse dem Herrn Bundespraesident darzubieten."

During the evening the winners of the "Points Prize" over the series of "Yass evenings," conducted by the club, were announced. The winners were:—

Mr. F. Suter	9979 points
Mr. J. Kaiser	8571 points
Mr. J. Dettling	8716 points
Mr. J. A. Kaiser	8571 points
Mrs. J. Kaiser	8435 points
Miss J. Bernold	8396 points
Mr. J. Sidler	8371 points

The celebration was a decided success throughout and special thanks are due to the active organisers of the event.

A. SCHICKER.

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### Small Cars Becoming Rule

About two-thirds of the motor-cars on Swiss roads are vehicles of less than 11 horse-power, according to a recent survey by the Government. This confirms the trend noted in recent years to small cars.

More than a quarter of the cars on Swiss roads are made in Germany. Other suppliers, in order of importance, are the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France and Italy.

As for trucks, rather more than one-third are made in Switzerland, the rest coming mostly from the United States and Germany.

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