

# Juerg & Ursula Stucki - This is our story

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## Juerg & Ursula Stucki – This is our story

Ursula and I arrived aboard the Migrant Vessel "TS Flavia" during the winter of 1967 from Rotterdam via Panama & Tahiti to Auckland. We were a rather adventurous young couple, Ursula having spent some time in England as a Nanny, then joining me in Sweden where I had found work in Sundsvall, a City 600km north of Stockholm, before I moved south to Lund, a well known University Town near Malmoe. A year later we headed back to Switzerland where we subsequently married and settled. Only



2 years later, we decided to emigrate to somewhere, as it is quite common for people in our profession. Traditionally, one finds Swiss confectioners & chefs working in palaces, hotels & restaurants all over the world. In our case we simply hoped to find a more promising future for the two of us. We had first met at the tender age of 16, whilst doing our apprenticeships at the world renown "Confiserie Zurcher" in Montreux. Ursula came from Neunkirch (Schaffhausen) and had taken up training as a shop assistant/waitress and I had arrived from Langnau (Bern) to become a Patisserie - Chocolatier.

Thanks to a contact in NZ, we suddenly



had found a country to focus on and started the emigrating process to go and live in this far away land, of which we knew precious little.

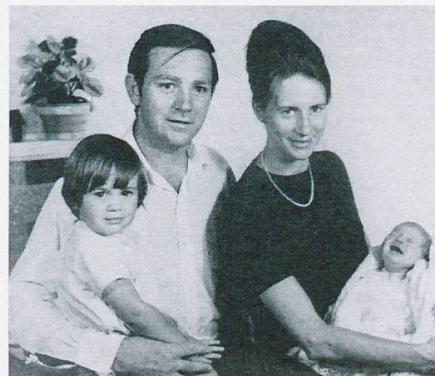
Thanks to the help of Heidi & Heinz Leuenberger, who had found a Sponsor for me to work at the Tirau Bread Factory, things quickly started to eventuate. Upon arriving in Auckland I proceeded to the information desk, where a lovely young lady was making announcements over the microphone. In my broken English I asked her to call out for Mr Leuenberger to make contact. She then put the Mic down and with a big smile, asked me in the best of Zueriduesch "Wie viel Schwiizer sind er uf em Schiff?" After travelling half way round the world, the first person we talked to in NZ turned out to be the daughter of the Bachmanns, a Butcher family who lived in Auckland.... nice one!

Before I could take up my promised position at the Tirau Bakery, I had to wait for an opening and due to the fact that we had very little funds of our own, I had to look for an interim job. And so it came about that before long I found myself equipped with a slasher as a member of the "Huhu Gang" at a saw mill in Te Whetu. This was a bush settlement about 25km west of Lichfield, where we worked in the plantation, freeing young saplings from weeds. Now, that was quite a challenge for me, since I had never before worked out in the open. However within a few weeks, the job at the bakery became available. Whilst working in the bush, I had contracted rheumatic fever, which affected my hands and made it rather difficult for me to do the job I was assigned to. This very nearly resulted in me getting sacked. Thanks to the intervention of my friend Ernie Wuthrich, this devastating and demoralising threat was averted and slowly things started to improve from then on.

Soon after settling in Tirau, we had begun making chocolates of all kinds on the kitchen bench at home. At first mainly for the local Swiss people we had befriended, but soon were able to sell them to Delis, from Hamilton to Te Awamutu, Cambridge & Tauranga!

During our second year in NZ before Easter, Ursula all by herself, created over 1400 chocolate bunnies, which were then a real novelty for NZ. This was long before the supermarkets were selling the now so ever present gold wrapped ones from "Lindt"! By then I was working at a new job at Kinleith and staying at the

pulp and paper factory mens' camp in Tokoroa during the week - having found a new job away from the constant night work at the bakery. Within weeks we were given a brand new factory house. The remuneration was well above average. Needless to say, that we were able to save money fast, right from the word go. By then our little family had grown to four - we had become parents of two lovely little girls. Nicole was born



in Tirau in 1969, Christine in 1971 in Tokoroa.

Only four years after setting foot in NZ, with nothing more than a few hundred dollars of our own, we were starting to look around for our own business. Very nearly we would have bought the Geneva Bar in Putaruru, but when in the HELVETIA under the advertisement of the Matterhorn Coffee Lounge in Wellington, a line appeared stating that this business was up for sale due to ill health of the owners, we contacted them and were asked to come and see them asap! It looked as if we were the right people to take over their busy Cafe in central Wellington. And so it came about, that one day in February of 1972 Ursula & I travelled 600km south to the capital. Our little girls were staying with friends and with our then brand new





little Austin 1100 we headed off. After spending a night in a motel in the Hutt Valley, we then went to find Mary and Toni Tresch, who lived in the suburb of Karori. It was Sunday morning and a little elderly lady opened the door and told us that Mr and Mrs Tresch were still at church, but would soon be home and with this we were invited in to the house.

What then followed changed our lives forever! After a lovely lunch with Tony and Mary Tresch, we were driven in to the city to have a first look at the *Matterhorn* in Cuba Mall. To us country bumpkins everything looked very flash and we were quite overwhelmed by it all. It was a Swiss Chalet, complete with a copper cauldron over an open fire place. Red and white chequered table cloths covered the wooden hand crafted tables, framed by a huge mural of the famous Matterhorn Mountain and the whole decor was rounded off with



an enormous cow bell that hung above the main entry. It was the only Cafe in the city that had an outdoor area. We liked it.

Later, Tony set up a little contract, which we both signed. He said he would go and see his lawyer the next day, to make the deal legal! With this and lots of assurances and good wishes in both directions, we departed on our long way home. Back in Tokoroa, I handed in my notice, sold our near new car (the proceeds of it became the deposit to buy the *Matterhorn* and a month later we headed south, Nicole and I with the truck and our belongings, Ursula and baby Christine by way of Luxury Landliner.

And so it came about, that we became the new owners of the *Matterhorn Cafe* in Wellington! It was arranged, that the elderly sister of Mary Tresch was to become the nanny for our girls, whilst Ursula and I went to work from dawn to dusk literally. From that point on we never looked back! Having been a labourer for the past four years and now all of a sudden becoming a businessman and employer, was a huge challenge, to say the least. We had taken on a huge financial burden but quickly realised that with the income created, paying it off was not such a big deal and within three short years, the *Matterhorn* became freehold!

It was all go and the future looked very bright for us. Quite literally we had struck gold! We kept the business for 15 long years until 1987. A lovely house in Wadestown high above Wellington Harbour had become our home, where over time our two little girls grew up in-

those long hours at the cafe. Slowly but surely, we had become tired of all that "chrampfen," especially Ursula who felt the effects of being at the forefront of it all for so many years and desperately had to find a way out of the rat race sooner rather than later.

After selling the Boulevard Cafe in 1990 to a young couple, we retreated for a well earned breather to our then holiday home at Lake Okareka near Rotorua. Unfortunately, after only two years, we were forced to repossess the cafe! The new owners had run up huge debts and we as the Guarantors of the Lease to the owners of the building, had no choice but to go back in and salvage what was left of the business. Reluctantly, we moved back to Wellington, where we had to rebuild and regain our once huge clientele. This was hard slog, but over time they all returned to us. The raging recession of the late eighties and early nineties had finally caught up with the Capital and it took four long years for us to bring the cafe back to its former glory. This time round we were very cautious and careful when looking for a successor to whom we sold the cafe. Subsequently we sold the business for a second time, this time for good. That was back in 1996. Ever since then we are enjoying our retirement in this lovely and tranquil spot on the shores of Lake Okareka, where we hope to stay on for a long time to come.....the rest is history!

*Juerg is also a keen film maker. You can see his films by searching "Juerg Stucki NZ" on YouTube. He made a great film this year following his School Reunion in Langau.*

The following poem was published on the Limerick Motor Club website in 1998:

### Are you an active member?

Are you an active member, the kind that would be missed  
Or are you quite content that your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings and mingle with the flock  
Or simply stay at home to criticise and knock?

Do you take an active part to help the work along  
Or are you well satisfied to only just belong?

Do you ever take a stand for things you think are right  
Or do you leave the work to just a few and talk instead  
of fight?

Think it over member you know what's right and wrong  
Are you an active member or do you just belong?

to young ladies. Towards the end of the 1980s Lambton Quay had started to become the hub of Wellington and Cuba Mall had begun to stagnate a bit, so we decided to move and subsequently sold the *Matterhorn* in due course. We had purchased the much bigger and modern Boulevard Cafe on the first floor of the Lambton Square Shopping Centre." This was a wonderfully lucrative and very popular business. We employed up to 15 staff, three times the number we had at the *Matterhorn*. Over the years and thanks to a very sharp accountant on the one side and an equally shrewd solicitor on the other, we had managed to invest into commercial properties and by doing so our main source of income started to shift away from working all