



# Switzerland

## NEWSLETTER OF THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, PA

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### Our New Members

The following new members have been added to the membership list:

Albert and Ruth Oehler

Benoit Bosi

James and Veronica Bowen

Rosan Habegger

Ruth Michaels

We welcome our new members and look forward to meeting them at one of our forthcoming events.

With the addition of these members we currently have a membership of 203.

*Trudy Kuenzi, Membership Secretary*

### Forthcoming Events

The board is in the process of planning our traditional Christmas Dinner. The date is December 4. Enclosed with the newsletter you find a reservation form.

Also in the planning stage is the Sami Klaus party. Unfortunately, the location where we held it for the last two years does not exist any longer. At the time of this writing a new location has not been decided on yet. The

date, however, will be Saturday, December 10. So please mark your calendar for some traditional fun time for your children or grandchildren.

### 1995 Board of Officers

The current board has asked Chuck Erb to head a nominating committee to propose a slate of candidates for the 1995 Board of Officers of your Society. You will have the opportunity to vote by mail or in person at the Christmas Dinner, where the new Board of Officers will be introduced.

### 1994 August Picnic

Our traditional August 1 Picnic was held on July 30 in Rose Barn of North Park with a good crowd of members and guests attending. The weather was much in our favor which contributed to the good time. Steinstossen, children's and adult games, a children's lantern parade and dance competitions were among the highlights. Aside from the as always wonderful dinner and much awaited tombola. Good conversations and fellowship provided

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the glue. A midday power outage that lasted for the rest of the day made it impossible to play the recorded message from Mr. Otto Stich, President of the Swiss Confederation. (It is printed in its entirety below.)

Thanks are due to many members for their usual unstinting help in making this picnic another great success.

### Steinstossen '94"

Twenty eight men and women participated in the traditional Steinstossen (stone throwing) Contest at North Park. This is the third year our Society has held this event and it is still very popular for the participants as well as the audience. Winner in the men's division was B. Barrett with a throw of 23 ft. even. C. Claudon came in second with a throw of 20 ft. 8 in. H. Schaller threw the stone for 18 ft 9 in to place third.

Winner in the ladies division was J. Gigandet with a throw of 18 ft 11 in. A very close second was achieved by N. Kunz with a throw of 18 ft 6 in. N. Carlson threw the stone 16 ft 10 in.

Both B. Barrett and J. Gigandet broke the previous year's records. They are currently the champion record holders. Each year has shown improvement in the throwing distance, a study of the data shows. Once more congratulations to B. Barrett and J. Gigandet, our 1994 Steinstossen Champions!

*Henry Heer*

### Address by Mr. Otto Stich, President of the Swiss Confederation on the Occasion of the Swiss National Day 1994

My dear fellow Swiss countrymen and women abroad: It's a great pleasure for me to pass on

National Day greetings to you from the Government and fellow Swiss countrymen and women. I know that in many countries all over the world you gather together on this occasion to mark your connection with your mother country. You Swiss living overseas are our country's representatives abroad. Many people all over the world forge their image of our country from you. You are proof that Switzerland is a country open to the world and a country that has always looked abroad in its various activities. For our part, we in the home country want to take action in order to solve the serious social, ecological and economic problems that confront us.

Some political decisions taken here recently could easily give the impression that our outward looking country is gradually retreating behind its own borders. It's not only many politicians at home and abroad who hold this opinion but also many people who really care about the openness of Switzerland. Furthermore, there is a growing sense of uneasiness that there is a cleft between Switzerland's politicians and its people. In many circles this has lead to the current situation being judged too pessimistically. As President of the Confederation and as a Swiss citizen I cannot share this sense of pessimism. On the contrary: the fact that some popular vote did not show the Government and Parliament in too flattering a light should not be grounds for self pity and resignation. Rather it should spur us on to make a thorough examination of our position.

Our system of direct democracy has its price. It requires our politicians to have a high degree of credibility, to be ready for dialog, and to have a high level of personal commitment. It is just as important for our politicians to keep the well-being of the

country as a whole in mind. But far too often, this basic principle gets drowned in a sea of ill-orchestrated interest groups. And this is particularly damaging at a time of serious economic problems. At the same time I would caution against tampering with our system of direct democracy, just to improve the chances of parliamentary decisions being accepted. The problem has nothing to do with the rule of the game. It's the politicians and the decisions they make that are really under test. It is their credibility and personal commitment that determine whether the people support official policy. It's the politicians and not the electorate who must prove that direct democracy really works.

It is certainly regrettable that our people rejected participating in the European Economic Area and taking part in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Though we shouldn't conclude from this that Switzerland is seeking isolation. Our country is fully integrated, both in the world economy and in many international organizations, in particular the organization set up in Bretton Woods. The crucial factor behind our people's skepticism toward our country's foreign policies is the fact that our politicians haven't done their homework. Topping the list of things undone is the sorry state of our finances. For far too long now we have been living above our means. In the long term our growing debt will hit the lower income groups particularly hard and will encourage the development of a two-class society. It will also have negative consequences for Switzerland as an economic base. It is our duty to put our finances in order before the next elections. Furthermore, by finding forward-looking solutions to our pension and social security problems we will improve the domestic political climate and

strengthen our citizens' confidence in our political institutions.

Finally, it is essential that we make real progress in tackling our country's drug problem. Here, not just politics but also our economy must do its duty. The economy must ensure that people in our country have a job and a future.

Soon, Switzerland will be completely surrounded by member countries of the European Union. In the mid-term, the question arises as to whether we should strengthen this process by ourselves joining and having an active say in the Union. But in doing so we should focus neither on Europe nor on our own country. Economic and ecological interdependence demands global cooperation. And here our country has always held out an open hand. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade offers a tremendous opportunity to introduce global rules for the market economy. We would also want to see that economic competition is compatible with social justice and the environment.

And now I come back to the Swiss abroad. You are the living expression of the outward looking nature of our country. Your mother country will retain this characteristic despite the reservations shown in its foreign policy. But a basic premise for this is that our politicians put our house in order. In this way, our political institutions will win back the credibility needed to pursue the further opening of our country to the outside world. And with that thought, I wish you all a very happy National Day.

### Swiss Voters Approve Anti-Racist Law

With a voter participation of 45%, 54.7% of voters approved recently an anti-racist law.

The high negative vote was seen mainly as an expression of concern with limitations of free speech and not as an indication that nearly half of those voting might be racists.

Under the new law, publishing of racist material, spraying of racist slogans on public surfaces, intentionally belittling someone because of race and denying genocide committed against humanity become punishable. Racist jokes told in private and private arrangements such as apartment leases and employment contracts are not subject of the law.

### Saffron, Grown in Switzerland

Saffron, the biblical spice, was introduced to Europe by the Arabs in Spain. The plant from which it is derived, *crocus sativus*, was cultivated in the 16th century in France.

In the 18th and 19th century the small village of Mund in the Upper Valais in Switzerland was renowned for its saffron cultivation. At the turn of the century, however, the crocus in Mund all but disappeared.

In recent years the Rev. Erwin Jossen, has re-introduced saffron cultivation in Mund. He imported 20,000 crocus bulbs from Kashmir and now there are 65 lots in Mund growing them again. Mund is the only place in

Northern Europe where saffron is grown commercially. To harvest the active ingredient, short thin threads are pulled from each blossom. It takes about 3,000 threads to produce an ounce of saffron. Saffron is treasured for its taste as well as for its color.

### For Sale: Swiss Glass Cheese Platter

Unique heavy glass cheese platters with the outline of the map of Switzerland are on sale for a short time. These platters cannot be bought in the stores and only a limited number are available to our members. Many were sold at the National Day Picnic. They make lovely X-mas gifts and are a conversation piece on any buffet or table. Price \$15.00 each. Call Pat Heer 863-6950 or see me at the X-mas Party and Dinner.

Pat Heer

### Swiss Humor

Heidi zu ihrer Freundin: "Mein Mann hat nur noch die Fotografiererei in Kopf. Gestern hatte ich es endguelig satt und bin ausgezogen." "Und wie hat er es aufgenommen?" "Mit Weitwinkel, Blitz, und Blende 5,6."

The teacher: " Stephan, what are you doing? Are you learning anything?"

Stephan: "No sir, I am listening to you."