



# Switzerland

NEWSLETTER OF THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, PA

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SPRING 1995

## Forthcoming Events

Enclosed with this newsletter you find the invitation for the traditional Spring Luncheon. While we have not had a very hard winter this year we all are looking forward to sunshine, warmth, flowers, green, and soft breezes. The Spring Luncheon will help to enjoy them and to renew some old acquaintances.

## Holiday Dinner and 1995 Officers

A good crowd was in attendance at the 1994 Holiday Dinner. An unavoidable business trip to Europe for President Rolf Kuehni made it impossible for him to attend the final official event of his tenure. Joseph Gigandet ably filled in for him in welcoming the guests and chairing the brief business meeting.

A nominating committee chaired by Chuck Erb did a yeoman's job in coming up with a slate of officers. The membership supported their efforts by electing all proposed candidates.

The 1995 slate of officers of the Society are as follows:

*Joseph Gigandet, President*  
*Bruce Kuenzi, Vice President*  
*Sandra Tengowski, Secretary*  
*Florence Jacob, Treasurer*  
*Trudy Kuenzi, Membership Secretary*

Directors elected for 1 year:

*Ernest Gubser*  
*Ronald J. Saffron*

Directors elected for 2 years:

*Charles Claudon, Jr*  
*Evelyn Ruffing*

Auditors:

*George Cline and Barbara Kuenzi*

We wish all of them much success in their efforts to provide the members with an interesting and stimulating program.

PRESIDENT:	JOSEPH GIGANDET, 5852 Kings School Road, Bethel Park, PA 15102	412 835-2223
VICE PRESIDENT:	BRUCE KUENZI, 7211 Church Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15218	412 271-5003
SECRETARY:	SANDRA TENGOWSKI, 69 Rich Hill Road, Cheswick, PA 15024	412 826-9266
TREASURER:	FLORENCE JACOB, 5415 McCandless Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15201	412 781-1375
MEMBER SHIP:	TRUDY KUENZI, 207 Churchill Road, Turtle Creek, PA 15145	412 823-1867

DIRECTORS: CHARLES CLAUDON JR., ERNEST GUBSER, EVELYN RUFFING, RONALD SAFFRON

Consul Heinz Kunz briefly addressed the group congratulating them on another successful year of activities and thanking departing President Rolf Kuehni for his efforts.

As always, a well-stocked tombola provided excitement not only for the attending members and guests but also for the waiting personnel.

### **Membership News**

We are sorry to hear of the passing of our member Kathleen Vater on December 21, 1994. Our sincere sympathy to the family.

The Society welcomes back Robert B. and Tina Lienhard.

Currently the Society has 193 members. The family membership continues to be \$5.00 per year. We thank all those who have sent their 1995 dues and encourage the few who have not yet done so to send a check payable to the Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh to Trudy Kuenzi (see address on front page).

Milbert and Lorly Fichter will celebrate their 54 years of marriage in May. Congratulations to you both on this great milestone in your lives.

*Trudy Kuenzi, Membership Secretary*

### **New Identity Cards for Swiss Abroad**

Starting in 1995 Swiss Abroad will be able to obtain new identity cards from their local responsible consular agency (New York in the case of Pittsburgh). The current identity cards are being replaced because they are easy to forge. The new model, in credit card format, is being introduced during 1995. The information given on the cards are in Switzerland's four languages, as well as in English. A three-stage system of security elements in the card will make forgery impossible. All personal details on the card will be centrally stored at the Federal Office of Police in Switzerland. Data protection is guaranteed. The price of the card has not yet been decided but it will cost less than a passport. If you are interested contact the Consulate General in New York or consult the local Consul Heinz Kunz.

### **A Source Tax on Pension Benefits**

A law has become effective in Switzerland on January 1, 1995 according to which Swiss federal, cantonal, or municipal pension benefits for recipients residing abroad have 1% of the gross pension income deducted. This amount is collected by the Swiss Federal Government. Cantonal governments soon will also introduce taxation at the source (withholding), by deducting an additional amount (varying by Canton). There are only two things in life certain .....

## Swiss Voters Reject Agricultural Reform, but agree on 'spending brake'

Despite the fact that Switzerland has chronic overproduction of milk, cheese, and other agricultural products, that then are highly subsidized to sell them outside the country, Swiss voters recently rejected an agricultural reform package. Many groups did not think that the proposals went far enough. Environmental groups have called for greater support of organic farming conservatives and consumer circles wanted freer market conditions.

In the same vote a constitutional amendment introducing a 'spending brake' was overwhelmingly accepted. In practice it means that spending plans beyond a certain limit will in the future have to be approved by a majority of all members of parliament, rather than only by a majority of all the members present on a given day. Over eighty percent of the voters approved this mild form of further spending control.

## Canton Jura Close to Achieving its Goals

The interesting exercise in democracy begun a few years ago with the secession of the Canton Jura from Canton Bern continues. Recently, the Bernese voters overwhelmingly decided to modify their cantonal borders once again and transfer the small village of Vellerat (70 inhabitants) to the Canton Jura. The Vellerats have been interested in this move since 15 years.

The last claim of Jura against Bern for all remaining French-speaking districts in the Bernese Canton will have to be settled later. While on the surface this might be another sensible move, there is another and also old reason that might not lead to its success in a future vote. The current borders were established in the 16th century, when the southern French-speaking districts of Switzerland changed, together with the neighbouring German-speaking Bern, from the catholic to the reformed church.

## Swiss Woman Skier Again Clinches Slalom and Overall Skiing Title

Vreni Schneider, triple Olympic champion, won her sixth World Slalom title by placing second in the recent slalom races in Lenzerheide and winning the final race in Bormio, Italy. She is also first in the overall standings for women. The Swiss men skiers had a more difficult time in this season, with all categories continuing to be dominated by Alberto Tomba from Italy. In the women's downhill category the winning skier in this season is the American Picabo Street, also of Olympic fame.

## Swiss Franc Continues to Get Stronger

Travelling in Switzerland continues to get more expensive due to the rising value of the Swiss franc compared to the U.S. dollar. Recently, the official exchange rate was at sFr. 1.17/dollar. However, if you are actually buying Swiss banknotes you only get about sFr.1.12/dollar. Keep saving for this trip you are planning! A consequence of the strong Swiss franc has been a 10% reduction in overnight stays in Swiss hotels in 1994 compared to 1993. Other negative effects involve the export of Swiss goods.

## Swatch Tells When to Take the Pills

The Swiss watch maker Swatch is teaming up with the Swiss telephone company to develop a special watch that can beep its owner at a given time of the day to remind her that it is time to take the pills. The watch dial then displays specific information about what to take.

## Swiss Humor

A professor in Switzerland warned her class to beware of polls and pollsters. "They can get any answer they want with loaded questions," she warned. She cited the case of Swiss voters who replied 'no' when asked if they approved of smoking while praying. "The vote turned to 'yes' when the same people were asked if they approved of praying while smoking," she told the class.

*Supplied by Evelyn Ruffing*

"Was angeln Sie?" "Forellen."

"Schon etwas gefangen?"

"Nein."

"Aha. Und woher wissen Sie denn, dass Sie Forellen angeln?"

Einer am Stammtisch: "Was isch eigentli en Lokalpatriot?"

Der Kollege: "Daenk eine wo immer I der gliiche Beiz verchehrt."