



# Switzerland



NEWSLETTER OF THE SWISS-AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Volume 6, No. 1

Spring 1997

## News from the Consulate of Switzerland

*Heinz W. Kunz, Ph.D., Consul*

Ambassador Alfred Defago, who has been serving as Consul General in New York, has been appointed Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America. We wish him well in his new position. We extend best wishes to former Ambassador Carlo Jagmetti for his retirement.

The Swiss Government has appointed Jacques Reverdin as Consul General in New York to succeed Ambassador Defago. He will start his position in June. We extend a warm welcome to Ambassador Reverdin and hope to welcome him in Pittsburgh in the near future.⊕



## Current Board of Directors: Swiss-American Society of Pittsburgh

<b>PRESIDENT:</b>	Bruce Kuenzi, 7211 Church St., Pittsburgh, PA 15218	412-271-5003
<b>VICE PRESIDENT:</b>	Charles Claudon, 3156 Sundance Ct., Allison Park, PA 15101	412-443-8369
<b>SECRETARY:</b>	Nancy Flury Carlson, 118 Monticello Dr., Monroeville, PA 15146	412-856-0982
<b>TREASURER:</b>	Walter Schaller, 104 Hilglo Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15209	412-821-7734
<b>MEMBERSHIP:</b>	Trudi Kuenzi, 207 Churchill Rd., Turtle Creek, PA 15145	412-823-1867
<b>DIRECTORS:</b>	Connie Ostertag, Lizann Maddama, Sam Gerber, Hans Meier	

## 35th Saengerfest

A reminder to all members, the North American Swiss Singing Alliance is celebrating its 100th anniversary with its 35th competition and concert. The event is being held at Seven Springs Resort July 18-20, 1997. This is a tremendous cultural opportunity for Swiss in our own backyard. Twelve singing clubs will be participating from as far away as Calgary and Edmonton, Canada. We have enclosed the price list for different levels of participation. Please note: Checks for Fest Cards, tickets, and Well Wisher contributions should be made payable to **35th NASSA Festival**, and mailed to:

Robert Bayer  
23 Allen Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15210

Reservations for lodging should be made directly with Seven Springs Resort. Well Wisher Contributions should be received by **May 15, 1997** to ensure publication in the program.

This is an ambitious undertaking for a small organization. If you would like to volunteer to help in some way, contact Bob Bayer at 412-431-2189. If you would like to attend but feel transportation may be a problem contact Bruce Kuenzi at 412-271-5003.

Included at the end of this newsletter is the price list for the festival, including information about lodging, tickets, and a registration form. See you at Seven Springs!⊕

## 1996 Holiday Dinner

The Society held its annual Christmas party at Tivoli's on December 1st, 1996. It was our usual first Sunday in December, but as it was also the end of Thanksgiving weekend, attendance was off a bit. The Board is considering new locations for the 1997 Christmas dinner. Contact Charles Claudon at 412-443-8369 if you have suggestions. The Sami Klaus party was held December 9th in conjunction with the Kinderchor of the Teutonia Hall at their location. This cooperative effort worked well for both groups. The Swiss provided treat bags and arranged for Sami Klaus to visit, and the Kinderchor provided pizza and soft drinks. Both groups brought ethnic desserts. A grand time was had by all.⊕

## Sister Republics

Did you know that Switzerland and the United States have an important relationship dating back to colonial times? In 1776 when the Declaration of Independence was being drafted by Thomas Jefferson, some say that he even used phrases inspired by the writings of Swiss natural law theorist Jean Jacques Burlamaqui. At that time, the Swiss Confederation was made up of thirteen cantons and there were thirteen colonies joining to become the United States.

The confederate republic form of government was a rarity at the time, and the Swiss embraced the new United States and considered this country a "soulmate in the community of nations." In 1778 Johann Rodolph Valltravers, councillor of Bienne, proposed an alliance to form "a lasting Foundation of Friendship, and of mutual good offices between the two Sisters, the 13 republican states of N. America, and of Switzerland." Although the alliance was never formalized, successive generations of Swiss and Americans have continued to influence and learn from each other.

### **CONTEST: Which 13 Cantons?**

Can you identify the 13 cantons of Switzerland in 1776? Start your research now, and bring your list to the Swiss Picnic this summer where all correct entries will be entered into a drawing to win a prize. For extra credit (and a bonus prize), include the date each canton joined the confederation!⊕

## Scholarship Available

The Pellegrini Scholarship Fund assists qualified students of Swiss descent who live in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania or Delaware to obtain formal academic or vocational training above high school level. One parent must be a Swiss national. For further information contact the:

Swiss Benevolent Society  
608 Fifth Avenue, Room 309  
New York, NY 10020  
⊕



## Uniquely Swiss!

Many of you who have lived in Switzerland are familiar with uniquely Swiss customs, holidays, traditions, games and sports. But those of us who have not spent a lot of time in Switzerland are often amazed, bewildered or amused to contemplate such things. Who has not wondered about the Steinstossen that we do each year at our picnic? Where in the world did Swiss people get the idea to throw a heavy stone as a competitive sport? And what about Schwingen, the form of wrestling in which each participant wears heavy canvas shorts that we can't help but see as large diapers? We've assembled a little list of Swiss peculiarities for this issue of the newsletter. Maybe some of the Swiss who are familiar with these customs will be willing to explain them in greater detail at a future picnic or meeting?

### Gansabhouet

November 11 (St. Martin's Day)

This traditional festival is from the town of Sursee, and dates back to at least 1821. Gansabhouet translates to "knocking down goose", and in fact involves a real dead goose. Near the Town Hall, a dead goose is hung by the neck. The young men of the town take turns swinging at the goose with a blunt saber. The men are blindfolded and wear red robes and a big round mask which symbolizes the sun. Each man gets only one chance to try knocking the goose down. While the goose whacking is taking place, children are occupied by a variety of games, contests and races.

### Hornussen

This game is popular in the Bernese Emmental region. The Hornuss is a wooden block shaped somewhat like a hockey puck, and it is driven from a fixed tee by a long whip-shaped club. In the field, 100 to 300 meters in front of the batter, receivers hold catching boards on long handles, and their goal is to knock the Hornuss down to the ground. They may bat at it, or throw their

boards in the air to intercept it. The word Hornuss means hornet, so you have some idea of what the Hornuss must sound like as it flies across the field.

### Schwingen

(Swiss Wrestling)

Two opponents each wear a short leather-belted cotton or linen pair of trunks. An umpire begins the competition by calling out "Gut!" ("good") and the two wrestlers take hold of each other's trunks and try to hoist the other wrestler into the air and down to the ground. The sport dates back to the sixteenth century, and is very popular among Alpine herdsmen of the Bernese Oberland. There is an annual Federal Swiss Wrestling and Alpine Festival, the winner of which garners the title "Schwingerkoenig" (King of the Swiss Wrestlers). True to the origin of the sport, the traditional prize for the Schwingerkoenig is a young bull.

### Steinstossen

(Stone-Putting)

One account of this game notes that it was a traditional event during the Schwingerfest. It is a stone-putting competition in which the contestant lifts an egg-shaped granite boulder as high as his head, and then tosses it as far as possible. The traditional stone weighs 83 kg (about 185 lbs!). The record distance for a stone such as this is about 10 feet. The first recorded festival for this sport was in 1805 in Unspunnen.

### Muehle and Outdoor Chess

These two games are popular, and played outdoors on large concrete slabs painted with the appropriate markings. Many municipalities provide these facilities in public parks or squares. The Muehle boards are marked with concentric squares 1, 2, and 3 meters across. Large wooden counters on the end of 10" or 12" handles are used. In some ways Muehle is similar to checkers. The chess men are 18" to 24" high.⊕



North American Swiss Singing Alliance 35<sup>th</sup> Saengerfest – July 18-20, 1997

PRICE LIST

PACKAGE PRICE: \$265.00 PER PERSON, SINGLE OCCUPANCY  
\$214.00 PER PERSON, DOUBLE OCCUPANCY  
\$192.00 PER PERSON, TRIPLE/QUAD OCCUPANCY

PACKAGE INCLUDES: Friday and Saturday night lodging, tax on lodging, Friday BBQ, Saturday Buffet Breakfast, Buffet Dinner and evening reception Sunday Brunch. Also all tax and gratuities for food service.

EARLY ARRIVAL AND/OR LATE DEPARTURE (ONLY AVAILABLE TO THOSE PURCHASING THE FESTIVAL PACKAGE)

\$80.00 PER PERSON, PER NIGHT, SINGLE OCCUPANCY  
\$56.00 PER PERSON, PER NIGHT, DOUBLE OCCUPANCY  
\$46.00 PER PERSON, PER NIGHT TRIPLE/QUAD OCCUP.

THESE SPECIAL RATES ARE SUBJECT TO 6% SALES TAX, AND DO NOT INCLUDE ANY MEALS.

FEST CARD                    \$50.00

SATURDAY ONLY TICKET \$50.00

This ticket includes admission to both prize singing and Grand Concert, Buffet Dinner, and post concert reception and dance.

PRIZE SINGING ONLY TICKET \$8.00

GRAND CONCERT ONLY TICKET \$12.00

WELL WISHER CONTRIBUTIONS:

\$5.00                    Well Wisher  
\$10.00-25.00            Schweizer Fruende (Swiss Friend)  
\$30.00-50.00            Edelweiss

---

ALL FORMS MUST BE MAILED TO: SEVEN SPRINGS RESORT, RESERVATIONS  
DEPT., R. D. 1, CHAMPION, PA 15622. TELEPHONE (814)352-7777.

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_ Total No. in Party \_\_\_\_\_

ATTENDEE: \_\_\_\_\_  
CLUB NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_

SPOUSE OR ROOMMATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
CLUB NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATIONS \_\_\_\_\_

CREDIT CARD AND NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

CREDIT CARD AND NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

EXPIRATION \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRATION DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
CHILDREN'S NAMES & AGES (If applicable) \_\_\_\_\_