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The Story of the Taranaki Swiss Club House

Little did I realise in 1939 when I worked as a general farmhand for Mr Fred Sattler in Kapuni, soon after arriving from Switzerland that in 1981 the trees which I planted on Fred's farm would be used as lining on the new Swiss house in Kaponga for the Taranaki Swiss Club. To recollect a few points from this time, our first year in New Zealand, tremendous changes have occurred over these 40 years. Wages at that time were generally about 16 Pounds a month plus a free house and a half a sheep per month. We only realised that language was not unsurmountable but difficult. When Mum wanted something from the store the boys got in contact with an older schoolmate, young Oswald Steiner, and brought home most of the time the things she wanted, but once she wanted a bottle of vinegar and off the boys went to get Oswald after the school to give them a hand at the store. However, he didn't know himself correctly and the boys brought home a little bottle of sulphuric acid, instead of vinegar, essig in Swiss sounded like acid!

Quite a windfall occurred for the Club after the Clubs jubilee in 1977 when at a sportsday at Kapuni a member walked up to Len Chamberlain and pressed a bundle of banknotes into this hand and Ruedi helped him to count the money. They found this hard to believe and sat down and counted it again and only then realised that it was \$1,000.00. Then they started in earnest to talk about purchasing a section of land. This was quite a boost to their morale and a 4 acre section was purchased at a reasonable figure at Kaponga.

The next step was electing a building committee, which consisted of: Len Chamberlain, convenor, Charles Schuler, supervisor, Ruedi Dudli, Leo Zehnder, John Bishop, Gary Hodel, Walter Zumbuhl, Joe Dettling, and Loui Kuriger. In addition this committee had the services of every tradesman that was ever needed and plenty of willing helpers were ready to come to work if contacted and of course the boosters of the general morale of the workers, the ladies with cups of tea and goodies were at hand all the time.

Finances were typically Swiss, the President and committee called on most of the Swiss population in Taranaki and received some wonderful and encouraging support on most places, only twice the President looked behind as if he felt a boot in his backside. The Bank in Kaponga was very helpful arranging finance up to \$40,000.00 on call, if it should have been needed but it was never necessary to call at the promised finance from the bank. At the moment, after the building is complete, the Club owes \$13,000.00 without interest, all to members.

The building: Most of the timber, some 18,000 superfeet had to be felled from Len Chamberlain and the Sattler Bros farms and plenty of eager helpers came forward to do this work. After it was felled and the ground cleaned up, the timber was carted by club members trucks to the sawmill and cut there for \$10.00 per hundred feet, making this one of the biggest expenses. When it came out of the mill the trucks were at hand again to cart it to Ruedi Dudli's place for filleting until it was dry and then from there to Opunake for dressing and treating. Some professional lumbermen emerged from this exercise.

On the 5th April 1979 the building started in earnest, levelling out and preparing the site. Usually about 7 to 8 men turned up and it was Len's job to organise this part, calling on the appropriate member of the building committee to be the foreman. On the 11th April 1981 the project was completed and the opening of the House organised. The Stratford Citizen's Band turned up and provided the Dignitaries and visitors with music during the day. Dr Alfred Weber, from the New Helvetic Society in Switzerland, Mr Marcel Ney, managing director of the Swiss Abroad Organisation in Switzerland, and Mrs Ney, Mr Walter Sollberger, Charge d'Affairs Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington, Mr John Villiger, President of the Swiss Society and Mrs Villiger, Mr Walter Risi, first President of the Club and past President of the Swiss Society, Dr Peter Lay, Chairman of the Kaponga Community Council, Mr Tom Abbott, Chairman of the Eltham County Council, the Honourable Venn Young, Minister of Lands, Mr Len Chamberlain, President of the Club, and the building was declared open by the Patroness of the Club, Miss Ida Bernold. Dr Weber spoke of his work among the Swiss Abroad and he said that Kaponga reminds him of the part of Switzerland he came from and he congratulated the Club for such a nice homely building and he presented the Club with a cheque for \$1,000.00 from the Swiss Abroad in Switzerland. He said that the Swiss are not only good to milk cows but they could also show others a thing or two about building. The honourable Mr Young spoke of the good name the Swiss have earned for their integrity among New Zealanders. Walter Risi spoke of the older Swiss who arrived here from 1870 to 1910 and he said that he was intrigued by their desire to have a Club to bind them to old Switzerland and that we are still receiving some encouragement from their actions, the good name they have earned for us is a guide on the path we stride and to our children.

Three Fitzgerald sisters and Marianne Benkert gave a lovely display of music in front of the house and inside Zeno Hospenthal and Wayne Tipler played Swiss music; among the musicians I have also noted Jeff Tonks and Ian Buttermore. As a guide to our geneologie, the Fitzgerald sisters are grand-daughters of Arnold Engelberger, the mother nee Doreen Engelberger and Zeno Hospenthal's mother is Frieda Engelberger. Mr and Mrs Engelberger would have liked to see and hear this wonderful recital. The Clubs renown Trachtengruppe, the Alphorn playing and the Swiss Flag throwing gave us a display of their art and it was very heartwarming and they can hold their own in any competition.

In the evening the house was practically full of supporters, just sitting and listening to the music. During the evening Mr J B Churchhouse, manager of the Bank of New South Wales, Kaponga, presented the Club with a picture depicting Swiss Scenery. He said that the name Steiner was represented among the first of its' customers. On 22 June 1910 Joseph Steiner became 45th customer, in the same year Martin Steiner became the 60th and in 1912 Oswald Steiner became the 104th customer. He congratulated the Club on their house and wished them well for the future.

The evening ended in the early hours of the morning.

WR

Friendship

In nature there is no blemish but the mind; none can be called deformed but the unkind. *Shakespeare*

To educate the heart, one must be willing to go out of himself, and to come into loving contact with others.

Convey thy love to thy friend, as an arrow to the mark, to stick there; not as a ball against the wall to rebound back to thee. *Francis Quarles*

Treat your friends for what you know them to be. Regards no surfaces. Consider not what they did but what they intended. *Henry David Thoreau*

If a man has a friend, what need has he of medicines? *Bhartrihari*

I always seek the good that is in people and leave the bad to Him who made mankind and knows how to round off the corners. *Goethe's mother*

A true friend unbosoms freely, advises justly, assists readily, adventures boldly, takes all patiently, defends courageously, and continues a friend unchangeably. *William Penn*

I have three chairs in my house: one for solitude, two for friendship, three for company. *Henry David Thoreau*

I don't meddle with what my friends believe or reject, any more than I ask whether they are rich or poor. I love them. *James Russell Lowell*

The most I can do for my friend is simply to be his friend. If he knows I am happy in loving him, he will want no other reward. *Henry David Thoreau*

Instead of a gem or even a flower, cast the gift of a lovely thought into the heart of a friend. *George MacDonald*

The supreme happiness of life is the conviction of being loved for yourself, or, more correctly, being loved in spite of yourself. *Victor Hugo*

He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself; for every man has need to be forgiven. *Lord Herbert*

Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. *1 Peter 4:8*

We are all travelers in the wilderness of this world, and the best that we find in our travels is an honest friend. *Robert Louis Stevenson*

Refuse to regard as unfortunate the treatment you receive from others; let it stimulate you to deal more justly with yourself and with them.

Friendship based solely upon gratitude is like a photograph; with time it fades. *Carmen Sylva*

It is sweet to be appreciated by a great number and to be understood by a few. *Abel Bonnard*