

Stories from our correspondents : Bodensee Bulletin

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Bodensee Bulletin

Carolyn Lane

This is an "occasional journal" in instalments from Switzerland. A little context first. My partner Mani Züst has been living in New Zealand since 1956, and since 1996 has been returning to Switzerland every May to October. Since 1998 I (Carolyn Lane) have been joining him for about 6 weeks of the summer, and from this year I am also doing the May to October migration.

We have a tiny holiday home only about 10 minutes from where Mani grew up, where the old Rhein goes into the top of Bodensee. It's a community of about 40 'husli' where many people come for the whole summer, and others for summer weekends.

The farmers and trees had an early start to the year, with a warm dry April. By the time we got here in early May, the fruit trees were long past flowering and in full leaf, and the farmers had already made hay. Of course, that has meant that in May we had the spring weather - up to 28 degrees, and suddenly down to 10.

For me, having not seen this time of year here before, the amazing thing is the speed and luxuriance of the growth. One day the plentiful rose bushes were in bud, the next in full bloom, masses of flowers on huge bushes. One day, the maize was being sown, only days later the field was greening, and a week later the plants were six inches high. The hedgerow plants have been flowering in series; we particularly note the holder/holunder/elder for the possibility of later picking. We have planted two in our little garden, and they've also flowered well with the promise of abundance of berries later, but it's always good to know where to go to augment them if we need to.

Our kiwifruit vine also flowered freely and fragrantly, but has set (again) very few fruit. It saves itself from the axe by serving its other purpose wonderfully - that of

providing a shady pergola under which we lunch, play chess, and host our informal roster of the almost daily Yass games. Depending on the mood and the number of "our gang" who convene through some telepathic process the game will be differentiala, shieber, schieber with a knech, or sometimes even six-handed shieber. The laughter is raucous, the debates over who did/ should have done what are animated.

Aside from that, the conversation seems to range widely. The "seems to" reflects my somewhat sporadic comprehension. Schweizer-Deutsch ist schwer!

So what are people talking about in this little North-East corner of Switzerland? The weather, of course, and occasionally that turns into conversations about global warming. Those are likely to heat up with a proposal for a 20% petrol tax to encourage people to switch to smaller cars and reduce use.

Bird flu is definitely in consciousness. The Bundesrat recently urged that people should get in supplies of face masks, to avoid a rush on them if/when they're urgently needed. A friend of ours went off to shop, and came back empty-handed: Migros sold out their entire stock within an hour of it arriving.

The August 1st celebrations at Rütli have been a hot topic. The right and left wing extremists have made a battle ground of the field at Rutli. Much of the debate had focused (of course) on who should pay for security. Some were saying that if the Federation pays for security for football matches, why should protecting the national day celebrations fall to the Cantons? The Federation offered the Army, but the Police said no, they'd handle it. There had also been a proposal to make it a women's day celebration there. But, solution: it's *all* off. There will be no celebrations there, and no boats running, so the various factions will find it hard to assemble.

What *hasn't* been talked about much until just now (mid June) has been the America's Cup. Swiss television has not been covering the Louis Vuitton series at all (the cost of the rights we believe). Getting news of Team NZ's progress has been a matter of texts from NZ and occasional brief footage at the end of a sports news programme. However we found a German digital channel doing live coverage for the final 2 races of the Louis Vuitton and loud were our cheers. There will be some divided loyalties shortly as Team NZ comes against Alinghi. More of that in the next episode!

Now - off to the sun, the deckchair and "German for Beginners" again....

P.S. 1

Ruetli: Three businessmen decided cancellation meant capitulation and put up the money for security themselves. The show goes on!

P.S. 2

America's Cup: Suddenly there was interest, and coverage, and celebrations. NZ skills were well-acknowledged, as were seven kiwis on Alinghi. We were gracious, sigh.

P.S. 3

The weather. The seasons remain umgekehrt. Wet cold fronts have come through in waves through June and early July, alternating with real summer. Flooding has been bad around Bern but Bodensee has escaped the worst.

P.S. 4

Rauch-frei Appenzell. Times change. Nine years ago I found indoor events hard to breathe through. Now, Kanton Appenzell has gripped the issue by the pipestem and announced it will go smoke-free. A referendum is bound to follow!

Winterthur is the correct answer to the July competition.
The winner was:
Dorothea Padrutt, Taranaki.