

Obituaries : Josef Keiser

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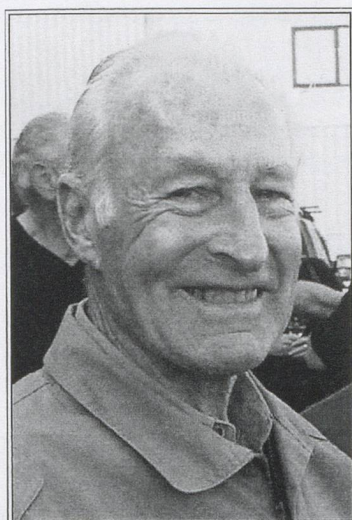
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Obituaries

Josef Keiser



11 February 1923 – 17 April 2013

Early Life

Josef was born on the 11th February 1923 in the village of Allenwinden which is in the county of Zug in Switzerland. It is now a village of about 1250 people. His parents lived next to his grandparents and he was the first grandchild. Josef had three sisters and two half sisters. His mother died when he was 10 years old and he was forced to do much of the housekeeping and cooking for the family. His father was killed in 1945 while felling a tree in the forest. As a religious family, they attended the Catholic Church in Kemptal. On the two hour walk to church, they passed the nearby mill and farm of Julius Maggi (of soup fame).

School Years, Early Working Years.

Josef attended school from the age of six in Effretikon. He had to leave school in 1937 at the age of 14 and was forced to go to work to support his young sisters. He worked as a delivery boy on a bread round, using a bicycle, for 6 1/2 days a week. In 1931, the family moved to Unteraegeri in the county of Zug. On a lake close by, Josef and a friend played ice hockey.

They had no skates, and they made their sticks from hazelnut branches and played only in their socks.

Josef also took part in cross-country skiing. He learnt a valuable lesson that you could lose sometimes as well as win. It was a lesson that remained with him for his whole life. When Josef was 16, he started his apprenticeship in Schlieren, Zurich, as a baker/pastry cook. He had no wages for three years and only live-in keep.

World War II

World War II began and all the bakers were called up to the army. Josef's boss offered him a small wage for 16 hours a day work.

In 1941, Josef had a major skiing accident while skiing over an army bunker. There was threat of amputation of his right arm, but it was saved. From then on, he was unable to bend his right arm.

1943 saw Josef called up into the army in the bakers' unit and he worked in the field artillery in the kitchen. He served mostly the officers. He saved all his pay and tips, and this was the start of his fare (unbeknown to him) to New Zealand. After the war, he worked in Zurich.

Destination New Zealand

In 1951, Josef considered the possibility of moving to Australia, as his low wages as a baker could not possibly support a marriage or a family. However, he had a Swiss friend living in New Zealand who sent him immigration papers. He sailed on the "Himalaya" from Tilbury, London to Sydney and then on the "Monowai" from Sydney to Auckland.

It was on the Himalaya that Josef met a New Zealand family called Lackland who had a daughter called Mabel – a journey of fate indeed. The language of love is international and was not an obstacle.

New Zealand – Key Events

- 1951 Arrived in New Zealand and started work in Te Aroha as a baker. The family he met on the boat visited him and it was through them he found a job and moved to Auckland.
- 1952 Married Mabel Lackland.
- 1956 They bought a home cookery which they had for 26 years. In October of that year, their first daughter, Elizabeth, was born.
- 1959 They bought their own home in Umere Crescent, Ellerslie, Auckland where Mabel still lives today.
- 1960 Their second daughter, Lorraine, was born.
- 1977 Josef became naturalized and a New Zealand citizen.
- 1990 May. Josef saved a young autistic boy trapped in a drain in a reserve in Ellerslie. This was featured in the East City News.
- 2012 June. The Keisers celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary.
- 2013 February - Josef turned 90 years old.

Mabel, his wife, describes Josef as a very honourable, honest, generous and sincere man. He was fiercely jealous and a wonderful husband and father. He was quite demanding and expected everyone to work as hard as he did. He liked playing tricks on people and loved a good joke. He loved all sport. The Olympics and Football were his special loves, along with the news and weather.

He told Mabel that a good marriage is give and take – he gives and she takes. Believe what you want!

We all love him.

He is Josef.

Josef lived at Mercy Parkland, Ellerslie, from February 2012 and this was just a short walk from his home.

The Auckland Swiss Club and the Swiss Society of New Zealand extend their heartfelt sympathies to Mabel, family and friends.