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Words from President and Editor

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all you readers

In this issue we meet General Blattmann, the Chief of the Swiss Defense Force; Flavio Milan a Swiss Diplomat seconded to NZ's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and a new Embassy Intern Derya Ünal. We have lots of OSA news as well as Swiss Citizenship changes that we need to become familiar with.

As mentioned in one of my previous editorials, digital is the way of the future and this is also confirmed by the Embassy's request, on page 3, for your e-mail address.

The life story in this issue is about my brother Peter Arnold. He will be a familiar face to many of you.

The bakers amongst us have been busy preparing recipes and photographing the production of their works of art. Perhaps we need a bake-off with Auckland's Kaffeekränzli !!! Kids' corner has a lovely beach-themed Christmas tree for the children to make. The cupcake competition promises to be a fun, tasty and creative adventure.

Finally I want to add how fast the year has gone. I have learnt so much about editing and about how much administrative work is needed behind the scenes to run The Swiss Society of New Zealand and its Helvetia. I take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed, not only to the production of the first 3 issues, but in the smooth management of issues behind the scenes that needed to be addressed and the team work that occurred to achieve their resolution. Well done team!!!

I will be salsa dancing through the streets of Cuba during the festive season, so without further ado have a super summer holiday season. See you next year.

Heidi

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We would like to thank our fabulous advertisers for their continued support. You are of great importance to the ongoing success of the Helvetia. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and a fabulous summer holiday season.

The Swiss Society and Helvetia Team

Dear Society Members

It is about 12 months since a few of our team set together and had a chat about the upcoming "Helvetia Duties". Look at it now, the third magazine is in your hand as you read this!

Christmas is knocking at our doors and I certainly wonder where the year has gone. The period leading up to Christmas is one I personally don't particularly like, mainly because it tends to create more stress and misery than happiness with so many people in the community. Don't get me wrong, the occasion and the subsequent holiday is something we as a family enjoy and have enjoyed since the day we came to New Zealand. For us a beach Christmas is always a highlight. Not anymore now, but in the early days it was our way of shaking off home sickness. I do hope you all will have time to unwind and enjoy the Festive Season with your loved ones.

Back to the Helvetia, there are some good reads in this edition too and I am sure you will find your favourites and when you do drop us a note because we really would like to hear your views. In October I had the privilege to attend the Oceania Swiss Clubs Presidents Conference in Melbourne. I certainly got more out of it than I anticipated and a more detailed report will follow later. The amount of work Switzerland as a country is doing for its citizens abroad is, as far as I am concerned, quite amazing. Some of the keynote speakers were: Juerg Buri, Director General of the Consular Directory of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Juerg talked about the importance they put on communication with Swiss Embassies and communities around the world and how they are working to improve rights of, and communication with, all Swiss Abroad.

Remo Gysin, President of the OSA, also from Switzerland, brought us up to speed with activities and achievements the OSA has made over the last 100 years and what's planned for the future. He too highlighted the importance of feedback from Swiss communities.

Of course there were many other important and interesting speakers, several from embassies in Australia and New Zealand bringing us up to date with current activities. I was totally unaware of how strong the focus is on connecting with the younger generation and it was great to see Ryan Cooper giving us an update on the work happening in the Youth Parliament of Swiss Abroad (YPSA). It was also great to catch up with all the club representatives from around Australasia.

In closing, I would like to wish you all a very Happy and Relaxed Christmas time and the Very Best Wishes for the New Year.

[Signature]
President

How do you celebrate New Year?

We bid farewell to the Old Year on 31st December, generally with a great party into the wee small hours of the New Year. Families and friends throughout the world meet either privately, get together with neighbours or celebrate at a venue with music, dance and some kind of entertainment.

The photo shows people holding glasses of champagne as they celebrate in the waters of Lake Geneva in Geneva, during the New Year's traditional bath, on 1 January.

In Switzerland the traditions vary from canton to canton. Some children visit their godparents and before receiving their New Year's presents they have to recite a verse or sing a song. This tradition is slowly dying. It was easier in the earlier decades because the godparents often lived close by.

In some villages the youths walk from house to house singing songs and wishing everybody a Happy New Year by shaking hands.

In many cities festivals with fireworks displays are held such as the Silvesterzauber (The New Year's Eve Magic) that takes place on the banks of Zurich Lake. The festival covers a huge space of the city, like Limmatquai, Hechtplatz and Utoquai and also the Quaibrücke at Bellevue.

Wherever and however you celebrate have a great time and remember to make a New Year's Wish.

