

In Memory of Florian Niederer

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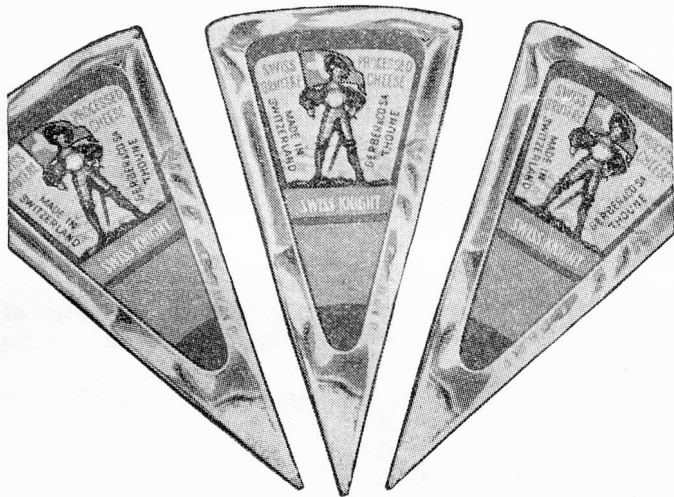
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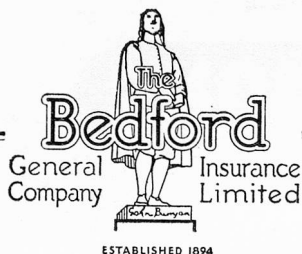
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IN MEMORY OF FLORIAN NIEDERER

At noon on 13th September 1960, shortly after his return from a strenuous morning at the office, Florian Niederer, Assistant Manager and Delegate for Special Missions of the Swiss National Tourist Office, passed away at his home, his "Schlössli" in Küsnacht on the Lake of Zurich.

His family, on whom he lavished so much pride and devotion, loses an ever kind, genial, understanding father; his country loses a son who was unrivalled in his mastery of the language of the heart — the language that all nations understand when they hear it spoken. For to him, who spent his days in the service of travel, publicity and propaganda were not mere advertising phrases; they were just a means to an end — to the attainment of the one great goal: winning sympathy and affection for Switzerland all over the world. One of his favourite sayings was that he, the specialist in "selling" Switzerland abroad, was trading in the finest Swiss product of all, and the only one to which everyone had access without paying customs duty — the incomparable Swiss scenery. "Merchant of Happiness" was the term Florian Niederer coined for himself, and with it he won over all his many friends abroad, and particularly those in America, for his profession — the profession which for him was a vocation in the truest sense of the word.

The Niederers hailed from Masein, near Thusis, in the Grisons. Florian, the sixth child and only son of the innkeeper of "Zum Süßen Winkel", grew up in the old quarter of Coire. His father, who possessed many a natural talent in many an art, from music to rhetoric, died even before the boy had reached school age. At the funeral someone offered to help the sorely tried mother, but Mrs. Niederer, proud daughter of the Grisons that she was, eyed the rank of her five daughters and the little boy at the end of the row, and replied: "I'll look after my organ-pipes myself". And she did.

It was to his undaunted mother, then, that Florian owed the sound education which was later to qualify him for a post in the service of the Rhaetian Railway and equipped him for his first voyage to America, where for three years, in the New York office of the travel agency, Thomas Cook & Son, he laid the foundation of his subsequent successful activity as public relations man for travel and holidays.

After his return home in 1922 he was appointed Manager of the Grisons Official Tourist Office and, in conjunction therewith, Chief of the Publicity Service of the Rhaetian Railway. Eleven years later he was called to the post of Assistant Manager of the Swiss National Tourist Office.

In this capacity he recently took over another function, viz., that of Delegate for Special Missions, which mainly entailed travelling abroad on public relations work. On an extensive trip through Canada last winter he had full opportunity to prove his sterling qualities as Switzerland's official "Ambassador of Goodwill".

But even before this title was conferred upon him, the "special missions" performed by Florian Niederer were legion, for his ability as an organiser and negotiator were truly outstanding. Among the campaigns in which he helped to enhance Switzerland's international reputation not only as the holiday land par excellence but also as a model democratic State and an industrial and export country as well, were the following: the official visit of the Lord Mayor of London to Zurich during the Swiss National Exhibition in 1939; the International Skat Club Congress in Zurich, 1939; management of the travel centre in Berne for American Army men on furlough, under the auspices of which hundreds of thousands of war-service G.I.s were able to find peace again in Switzerland; the organisation of the World Travel Congress (ASTA Silver Jubilee Convention) held in Lausanne and the Lake Geneva district in 1955.

But Florian Niederer was also active in numerous clubs and associations whose aims were similar to those which he himself, the advocate of travel as a link of understanding between the nations, was seeking to propagate. He was a founder member of — to mention but a few — the Association of Swiss Tourist Office and Resort Managers, the Zurich Skat Club, and the Swiss-American Society for Cultural Relations. Particularly in North America, where he was the best-known Swiss in travel circles, Florian Niederer's reputation was so high that he was often introduced to newspaper readers and radio and television audiences all over the country as "Mr. Switzerland in person".