

A departure

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A DEPARTURE.



WILLY WYLER.

When some short time ago it became known that Mr. W. Wyler, General Manager for the U.K. and Ireland of the Swiss Air Transport Co. Ltd., was going to leave London, the news was received with genuine and universal regret.

Seldom has a man, after a relatively brief residence in this country (seven years all told), achieved so much both in his profession and in the life of the Swiss Colony.

The Colony often shows a certain reluctance, or even suspicion, to accept new-comers at first into their inner councils. What has taken some of our compatriots years to achieve — namely, to gain the confidence and affection of their fellow countrymen — Mr. Wyler has achieved in an amazingly short time.

Our friend was born at Lausanne on a 1st of January. Apparently his mother — he was told — went for a little spree on New Year's Eve and drank champagne; "That may be the reason why ever since I have been lucky in my life", he told the writer.

He received his schooling in his native town, finishing with a diploma from the Commercial High School. On leaving school he started as a junior clerk with Thomas Cook's in Lausanne.

There he found a wonderful spirit of comradeship amongst his colleagues, making many friends, amongst them an Englishman who was one of his bosses, and who only recently retired from Cook's in Manchester. In this employ, no doubt, the foundation was laid for the happy spirit of collaboration and loyalty which was so apparent in the succeeding years, and it is there that the key to his successful career can be found.

It was no easy job, the hours were long — sixty

to seventy hours per week — but our friend was young and imbued with an indomitable spirit to succeed. Soon an opportunity presented itself to enable him to be employed not only in tourism and travel work, but also in freight and banking, thus widening his horizon considerably. Employment followed in various places in Basle, Zurich, Montreux, and Geneva, leading to the post of Freight Manager for Switzerland.

As in so many cases, the second world war prevented him from going abroad, but it so happened that on the conclusion of the hostilities his concern received a visit of the General Manager of Wagons/Lits Cook's for South America, who accorded him an interview. He must have been favourably impressed by this eager young man, who was then "a slim elegant sportsman". Two years later he was offered the position of Assistant Manager for the Argentine in Buenos Aires.

The bags were packed and our friend left in happy anticipation for Rio, but not alone, because a week prior to his departure he had married a charming young compatriote of his, and together they crossed the sea towards the Southern hemisphere on their life's first big adventure. He was met at the Port by his future chief, who experienced quite a shock, because instead of the expected "slim elegant sportsman" of two years ago, he beheld the figure of a "heavy-weight boxer".

Before taking up his duties, he and his wife spent a two months honeymoon, which took them to Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Santos and Montevideo.

Mr. Wyler looks back to-day with some nostalgic feelings to the five years which he spent in Argentina and which brought him much success. Before long he was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Argentine Travel Agents Association, being the only non-Argentine member of the committee, Treasurer of the Skat Club, and an active member of the Swiss Colony in this part of the world.

Then one day he was offered the post of General Manager for the U.K. and Ireland in London for Swissair.

Reminiscing about the last seven years during which he had been at the head of the London Office, he told the writer that he considers aviation to be one of the most exciting and fast moving industries with continuous changes, and demanding an alert mind lest you be left behind or overtaken by constant new developments.

For Switzerland, without any long experience in world communications, aviation presented at the time an entirely new field. A staff, both commercial and technical, had to be trained first — it was indeed a case of starting from scratch. The General Management of "Swissair", he said, had in a relatively short time made tremendous progress.

Mr. Wyler mentioned that during the last seven years he had been connected with "Swissair", the following types of aircraft were flying to the United Kingdom: the DC-3, the DC-4, the Convair, followed by DC-6B, afterwards the Metropolitan and the DC-7 and this year in May the new jet, the Caravelle, will fly between London and Zurich, which makes seven types in seven years.

Dealing with his work whilst in this country, Mr. Wyler said that he had opened new offices in Regent Street and the West London Air Terminal, a new maintenance base at London Airport, new offices

in Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, Manchester Airport, Dublin, and Shannon, the last named being the main intermediate link for all flights to New York.

"Swissair", he told the writer, actually employs 120 people in this country; in London alone there are five main departmental managers, *Operation Manager*, who is in charge of the airport, *Sales Manager*, who is responsible for bringing in the revenue, *Freight Manager*, whose work is similar to the one of the Sales Manager's, only for freight, *Traffic Manager*, who is in charge of reservations and the Ticket Office, *Finance Manager*, who looks after the finances. In addition there are five district managers in the Provinces.

My readers will no doubt agree that such an organisation — mainly built up during Mr. Wyler's tenure of office — makes heavy demands on its chief. In his work he is — as he confessed himself — supported by a devoted and loyal staff.

Having made a success of his job in this country, is it to be wondered at that the "Swissair" General Management has called him to a still bigger task by appointing him a member of the General Management in Zurich, and General Manager of Western Switzerland in Geneva from the end of January 1960? In his new appointment at Geneva he will be in charge of a staff of no less than six hundred.

Whilst we rejoice with him on this well-deserved promotion, tendering him our most sincere congratulations, we cannot help feeling sad at losing him.

Soon after his arrival from South America, Mr. Wyler showed a marked interest in the life and work of the Swiss Colony. It was not his intention, nor the wish to seek the limelight; although at least two offices as President could have been his for the asking, he kept in the background partly also on account of much travelling. His work was, so to speak, "*derrière les coulisses*"; there he gave all the support he was able to give.

Mr. Wyler was a member of the City Swiss Club, Vice-President of the "Fête Suisse" committee — to which he rendered eminent services with regard to finance — the Swiss Economic Council, the Swiss Rifle Association, the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, and the Confrérie Vaudoise. Apart from Swiss Societies and Institutions, he belonged to the Travel Luncheon Club, which is probably the most select Club of tourism in the world, the Foreign Airlines Association, and the Rotary Club of Kensington. His social life kept him fully occupied. His tact, cheerfulness, integrity and modesty and a great sense of humour — so seldom found amongst Swiss — made him a welcome guest in all these circles. In his social activities he had an ideal partner in his wife, who by her charm and cheerfulness captured all hearts.

And now, when the parting is nigh, we will not say good-bye, but "au revoir". We thank him and Madame Wyler for all they have done; we shall be poorer for their departing, and from the bunch of farewell flowers we will pick one little simple forget-me-not as a souvenir of good and trusted friends.

ST.

AN APPOINTMENT.



M. A. KELLER.

On the appointment of Mr. Wyler as "Swissair's" General Manager for Western Switzerland in Geneva, and member of the airline's General Management, Mr. M. A. Keller has succeeded him on the 1st of January 1960, as General Manager for the U.K. and Ireland, and we tender him herewith our sincere congratulations on his promotion.

The new General Manager has been "Swissair's" Sales Manager for the U.K. and Ireland since July 1956. Under his energetic and enthusiastic direction "Swissair" has over the past few years considerably increased its revenue in the U.K. from both touristic and long-distance traffic.

Mr. Keller began his career in private banking business in Zurich and joined "Swissair" in Geneva in 1946. Two years later he was promoted to the position of Regional Manager for Belgium in Brussels, and from 1951 to 1954 he was Regional Manager in Dusseldorf. He was then appointed Assistant Manager, Agency and Interlines Sales, at "Swissair's" Head Office in Zurich, and came to London as Sales Manager in July 1956.

At thirty-six Mr. Keller is one of the youngest General Managers of a foreign airline in this country. He is married and has two sons aged two and six. Among his hobbies are gardening and making aeroplanes for his boys. His ambition is to make "Swissair" even more popular and successful in this country than it is already. In this he will no doubt succeed to the great advantage of Swiss air transport and the air travelling public.

We are extending to Mr. Keller our heartiest good wishes for success in his new sphere of activity.

ST.