

It is actually very easy to pinpoint the beginning of the Young Swiss Club of Chicago. Yet, if you ask any of the "old timers" when and how it started, you would get many differing answers. Why is the start of our Club, on which so many people have been active in its beginnings, such a mystery?

Well, really, there was no such thing as a start, unless you want to put the beginning to the Autumn Sunday in 1954, when the then Consul General of Switzerland in Chicago, the Honorable Dr. W. Schilling, invited all the recently immigrated younger people who had immatriculated at the Consulate to an informal get-together at the Swiss Clubhouse.

This occasion, for most of us, marked the first contact we had with the existing Swiss Societies. Since the war completely stopped the steady exodus of younger men and women from Switzerland to the U.S.A., there was a gap of 20 years, in which no new blood reenforced these Societies, and a newcomer would soon, because of lack of companionship of his own age, forget conveniently that there was such a thing as a Swiss Club. The complete lack of the "generation in between" made it hard for the Young Swiss to assimilate with the older existing colony.

But, let's go back to our first get-together at the Clubhouse in fall of 1954. The Honorable Dr. Schilling, realizing that in order to survive, the Swiss Colony in Chicago had to be somewhat rejuvenated, and that the young Swiss had to be informed about the existing Societies, asked all the Presidents of the various Societies forming the United Swiss Societies of Chicago, to be present at this affair and to give a brief run-down on the activities and goals of their respective organizations.

Serving a typical Swiss Snack, White Wine and Swiss Cheese, the assembled young people listened attentively to these orators, and while there was no immediate rush to join the Societies, at least the beginning was made. Upon urging of the Consul General, three compatriots undertook the task of forming a committee to look into possible ways to interest the younger elements in the activities of the existing societies, and to form a group interested in keeping up get-togethers among the recent arrivals.

As a direct result of this first encounter, a cocktail party was held at the residence of Emil Widmer and Walter Finger, who, together with Gisele Kneubuhler, had originally volunteered their services at the Consul General's urging. It may be interesting to note that despite the germanic names, two of the trio were Suisses Romands, and this influence and the enthusiasm shown by this particular group of compatriots were responsible for the next happenings, evidencing the vitality and initiative of the boys and girls from the shores of Lac Lemman.

The cocktail Party, held on February 18, 1955, to which about 50 young people had been invited, served primarily to get better acquainted. While discussions about starting a group were rather unfruitful, nevertheless, the meeting resulted in many lasting friendships, and the quicker Romands even found time to conceive the idea for a Fondue Party, to be held at some future date.

THE ALBERT BAETTING FUND

~~XXXX~~ We are still no group, only a bunch of individuals, a committee, enlarged from the original three members, and the only thing that might at that time have given us a semblance of unity would have been the list of names of all those that had indicated a willingness to help in one or other way, if someone would only take the initiative and start the ball rolling.

It is May 23, 1955. A letter by the Consul General, Dr. Schilling, advised the committee that a young Swiss by name of Alber Baetting was suddenly stricken by a rare and deadly blood disease called Leukemia, and asked us for blood donations. Through the grapevine, this information was passed along from friends to friends, and in a letter dated June 1st, Dr. Schilling advised us that thanks to the spontaneous response by many of the young Swiss, Albert Baettig's condition took a turn for the better, and that, if this improvement continued, Albert could return to Switzerland in the near future.

At the time this letter reached the committee, Gisele Kneubuhler, accompanied by Chris Werth and Dick Segesser, paid a personal visite to Albert at Cook County Hospital, and were informed that enough blood had been donated and that he would no longer require their donation. Albert, not having been told that

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his disease was incurable, surprised them by his courageous outlook, discussing his plans, immediate and future.

Three silent and impressed visitors, knowing full well, that of all his plans, only one more could be fulfilled, were thinking of how they could help to get him back to Switzerland, so he could see his relatives once more.

A few days later, all the younger people on our address list received the following letter:

(.....see secretary's copy)

The response was amazing, immediate and overwhelming. Not only were we able to pay for Albert's trip but we could also pay part of the fare of the nurse accompanying him, as was required by the Airlines. Little did we know then that just a few years later, Sonja Zubler would also return to Switzerland with an incurable disease, and, like Albert, find her last resting place in the beloved earth of the homeland.

The one wish Albert expressed of going home to recuperate, was unfortunately not our privilege to grant, but at least, we all were proud of having helped to fulfill a part of this wish.

The Baettig incident had, in effect, brought together, in this manifestation of sympathy to an unknown and unfortunate compatriot, the people who ultimately became the driving force of what we now know as the Young Swiss Club of Chicago. The action of the committee was first viewed with scepticism by many of the older Swiss as well as the Consulate, and the Swiss Benevolent Society would have, undoubtedly, bailed us out of a bad situation, by helping to finance the return of Albert Baettig to Switzerland, had not our appeal for funds been such a complete success. Somehow, this act of solidarity among the young people made the bonds between us grow stronger and had a prompt effect on the future course of events.

THE RATHSKELLER

Through the Baettig Action, some of us younger boys got acquainted with the people actively engaged in the running of the Swiss Club House, and swapped ideas with several members of the Board of Directors, entrusted with the actual running and management of the place. We were convinced that it was imperative, if

we wanted to have a future meeting place, to get the young element to join the efforts of the Chicago Swiss Colony to save the property from being forced to close its doors due to lack of patronage. Our argument, naturally, was that the existing Club, though not in the best neighborhood and not in the best repair, was far more helpful to the Swiss Colony in its present state than no meeting place at all. Jean-Pierre Laubscher, one the members of the ~~XXX~~Groupe Romand, and Dick Segesser, were offered the cooperation of the Board of Directors to give the younger element ~~from~~ a room, free of rent for a certain length of time, where meetings could be held. We were looking for a permanent meeting place, open to us at any time of the week, and were finally offered a room in the cellar, which, during prohibition time, had ceremoniously been called the Rathskeller, but had since been used manly for storing all and everything that could not be used anymore in the more frequented upstairs rooms. Since the adjoining room contained the boiler and heating system for the entire property, a quick inspection of the Rathskeller on the urging of Mr. Fred Moor, then Treasurer and Director of the Board of Directors revealed a completely black but spacious cavern strewn with discarded furniture, musty beer-bar and two dirty, but usable lavatories.

It was evident to Jean Pierre Laubscher and Dick Segesser that transformation of these rooms would be a herculean task, requiring more than just paint and brushes. However, we could visualize, especially thanks to the tales of the glorious past of the Rathskeller rendered to us by Mr. Fred Moor and the undefatigable Mr. Gus Kirch, a new era for this cellar as our headquarters.

On a sunny Sunday in June, a chance meeting of Chris Werth, Dick Segesser, Jean-Pierre Laubscher, Ted Niggli, Gisele Kneubuhler, soon to be joined by Beret Bettschart and Henry Studer, finally resulted in action. The proposal of Mr. Moor and Mr. Kirch was discussed, and each participant accepted the responsibility to phone some of his friends, asking them to appear for a "Clean-up-Party" at the Swiss Club House the following Saturday. We were finally going to have a meeting place of our own.

Clad in blue jeans and the dirtiest clothes we could find, a group of boys and girls met for the first time in the Rathskeller. In the musty humidity soon everyone was dispensing with the shirts, and all of us were busy clearing garbage out of the place. Where today, you find a nice friendly bar, there was a half-rotten Beer-Bar, which was attacked by hatchet wielding eager helpers, levelling this monstrosity of a bygone age until only a concrete encased coppercoil remained to be hacked out of the floor. Once the floor space was cleared, we proceeded to elect Henry Studer as chief of the decorating crew, since too many chiefs were giving orders and everyone was pursuing his own little pet project. Under Hank's able direction, we were surprised at the developments. A first washing of the ceiling actually revealed that at one time, it had been white, and that the top of the walls, too, was of a light color, while the bottom, covered with woodwork and benches running around three sides, were all moldy and covered with a thin layer of soot. After two Saturdays of hard work, we were ready to paint. Hank's color scheme, white ceiling, contrasting darkbrown woodwork and benches and cream-colored upper walls, was quickly adopted and the painting of the North Room begun. Only four weeks after the start of Operation Cleanup, the North Room was finished and Hank released from his job as Chief, at his own request. George Schreiber, a professional painter took command of decorating the South Room, ably assisted by Hans Blaser, who was in charge of building the new Bar, putting in the cabinets and altering several other features of the room. The South Room, in contrast to the North Room, took on form much more slowly. Not only did the initial zeal among the helpers cool off considerably during the hot Sommerdays ahead, but the building of the fixtures, and the meticulous way in which Georges went about re-decorating this room, slowed progress to a snail's pace. Rather than slap another coat of paint on the woodwork, all surfaces were sanded down to the bare wood, and it was no surprise finding boys and girl's working in bathing suits in the hot and humid cellar, ready for a cool dip in the lake after the long Saturdays toil. The longer the project took, the less help Georges and Hans got. Jean-Pierre Laubscher was a tireless helper, and it was at this time that the Cognac-Boys cemented a real friendship, since the steady workforce shrunk to three when Dick Segesser had a near fatal auto accident. We were, however, lucky to find in Gus Kirch a friend of our efforts, and he soon spent most of his spare time fixing things and helping us wherever he could. Thanks to Fred Moor's and his assistance,

we were able to install more conveniences in our South Room, and while we owe Fred Moor our thanks for approving our considerable expenditures for paint, wood, formica and other raw-materials, we owe to Gus Kirch the installation of our refrigerator and of the gas-stove, the proper working of the sink and the men's and ladies washrooms, and such nice added touches as mirrors in the ladies washrooms. The cabinets behind the Bar, which Gus provides, were old kitchen cabinets, skillfully transformed into modern and functional fixtures by Gus and Hans Blaser. Many of the refreshments were donated by the sympathetic Fred Moor to replenish spent energies. In Dick's return to the Rathskeller in Mid December, the transformation was amazing. The woodwork had been stained and the natural wood-grain was brought out through the artistry of Georges, while all that remained to be done at the Bar was to cover it with rich red and black formica. The finishing touches to the South Room were taken care of during the month of January 1956, and another full bottle of Cognac found its way to the "empties".

GRAND OPENING

With the Grand Opening of our Rathskeller on February 25, 1956, began the actual activities of the Young Swiss Club, and this date can therefore be regarded as the official beginning of the Young Swiss Club. Miss Gisele Kneubuhler was directed to announce the opening to all people on our mailing list, and to invite the Presidents of each Society affiliated with the United Swiss Societies of Chicago. Naturally, the Honorable Consul General of Switzerland in Chicago, Mr. Oscar Schneider, and the staff of the Consulate, were invited to spend this festive occasion with us, as were Gus Kirch and Fred Moor, the two men responsible for our final success. In a meeting held prior to this Grand Opening, Dick Segesser was elected first President of the Young Swiss Club, and it was his task to welcome the Guests and introduce the main speaker of the evening, Mr. Oscar Schneider. No one remembers much about the speeches, but all of us who spent that first Evening together in the Rathskeller will always remember it as one of the nicest Parties he ever attended. Thanks to the determination of a few, the start of our Club had begun an era of unprecedented activities in the Swiss Club House, and many of our lives were profoundly affected because of its existence.

WE HAD ARRIVED.

EARLY ACTIVITIES

Aside from the early meetings mentioned in the beginning, there were quite a few parties and get-togethers, of which we especially want to mention the first FONDUE PARTY, held on May 13, 1955. This became the fore-runner of many more FONDUE Parties, and you might say that they have become a Club Tradition. However, as successful as they all have been, none approached this first one in hilarity and fun for all participants. The reason is simple enough. A good Fondue requires Kirsch, Garlic Clove, Dry White Wine, Gruyere and Emmenthal Cheese, (maybe a dash of salt, pepper and nutmeg), a good experienced cook andLES SUISSSES ROMANDS. This element, in the beginning of the history of the Young Swiss Club, was well represented, and under the direction of Pierre Martin, we soon had the spirit of the Les Suisses Romands transplanted to this Party, and even the slower and more reserved Suisses Allemands soon warmed up to the occasion. We all joined in the fun, and watched with amusement at the surprised faces of the people sitting in the bar, when Pierre led us on a merry Polka through the entire Club House. Alex Niederer, the Manager of the Swiss Club House at the time, would have liked nothing better than to join us, judging from the happy Jodeling coming from the Bar after Pierre, playing his accordeon at a crescendo, led us back into our Hall.

Shortly after this party, the enlarged committee agreed to form coordinating committees for various activities, such as tennis, golf, horseback riding and chess, which, for lack of a meeting place, were organized on a rather loose basis. As a whole, these activities never got off the ground, with the notable exception of the Swim Group, who was active in organizing the first outing and picnic at the Indiana Sand Dunes. This, too, became a classic in our activities and to this day, is the one event we all look forward to in the Summer.

In January of 1956, the United Swiss Societies were hosts to the Swiss Olympic Gymnastic team, who, a few months before had been runners-up to the surprising Russians in Helsinki. On this occasion, a Grand Ball was held at the Club House on January 22nd, and culminated in the Election of Miss Switzerland among the many young Swiss Belles.

Quite a number of our girl members participated in this affair and Miss Nellie Kaufmann, a young lady from Zurich, was crowned Miss Switzerland of Chicago. The Gymnastic Exhibition by the Swiss Team that won the Olympic Silver Medal was marred by a snow-storm, but nevertheless drew a large crowd to the Proviso Highschool Hall.

That our activities were followed closely by the members of the other Swiss Societies is evidenced by the many flower arrangements donated by individual couples, Mr. & Mrs. Fred Moor, and Mr. & Mrs. Alex Niederer, as well as from the Societies, The Ladies Chorus, Swiss Ladies Benefit Society and the Schweizer Damen Verein, which adorned the newly decorated rooms on our Grand Opening on Feb. 25th. The Swiss Male Chorus contributed its good wishes in the form of liquid refreshments. We were gratified by the presence of many of the most influential people in the Swiss Colony. After the greetings by the first elected President of the Club, Dick Segesser, the new Consul General of Switzerland, the Honorable Mr. Oscar Schneider, congratulated us on our splendid initiative and hoped that our Club would find ways of cooperating with the existing Societies in the same spirit that they exhibited toward us. Attendance at our Grand Opening filled the premises to full capacity, so that there was standing room only for the many latecomers and the bar was steadily ringed by thirsty people waiting to be served. Regardless of age, everyone that night was a Young Swiss and high spirits prevailed until the last diehards finally were persuaded to leave the bars, several hours late.

NARCISSUS FESTIVAL

Once the Club had found a permanent home, ambitious programs were suggested, as we young ones wanted to show that we, too, could become a rallying force in the Swiss Colony. The suggestion to hold a Narcissus Festival came from Henry Ginier, one of the enthusiastic supporters we had working for us at the Swiss Consulate General. Already early in 1956, the Young Swiss Club reserved the big hall in the Clubhouse for May 1957, and at a meeting held on August 31st, the members of the Club approved the idea of staging the Narcissus Festival, and Ted Niggli was elected as Chairman of the Festival. Business, however, prevented Ted

from carrying out his duties, and George Schreiber took over the Chairmanship shortly after Ted left Chicago for several months. Under George's direction, the first Festival Meeting was held in early December, and a committee, consisting of five sub-committees was organized. The finance committee was taken over by Peter Grieder, who later was replaced by Peter Scheuzger. Fred Spitaler was put in charge of publicity. The most important and most urgent work was the program, and this task was organized by Mr. E. Bovay, closely working together with George Schreiber, who was in charge of Decorations. Finally, Jean-Pierre Laubscher was put in charge of Bar and Kitchen Committee. Each sub-committee was to hold their own meetings, and report to George Schreiber on their progress. But, very little progress was made, no one seemed too perturbed about it, and time was running short. There is no question about the fact that George Schreiber had his hands full with the decorations, and had left the other committees a free hand in getting themselves organized, an invitation to what actually happened: inactivity and confusion. It looked as though the entire project and the whole ambitious enterprise were on the verge of collapsing. Early in April, with only a few weeks remaining, George Schreiber appointed Henry Studer as festival co-ordinator, and under his tireless efforts the organization was whipped into shape and began to perk up. Henry set, and the committees met, deadlines, and in the last four weeks before the Festival, all participants worked hard, and overtime, on their assignments. At the time Henry took over, there was not even a program set, and it is amazing, almost unbelievable, that the final program as outlined below was arrived at only 6 weeks before curtain-time. The program was as follows:

- 1) Greetings
- 2) Le Vigneron, sung by our own mixed Chorus
- 3) A Ballet danced by a Lithuanian Group
- 4) Tic-Tac Polka, performed by Carla Masalli.
- 5) Coppelia's Dance, by the Ballet Group
- 6) The Polka Jodel, by the Wicki Duo of Milwaukee
- 7) The Film Montreux
- 8) A Waltz, performed by four couples of Young Swiss

- 9) Le Chalet, sung by the Y.S.
Mixed Chorus
- 10) Folkdance by members of YSC
- 11) Election of Narcissus Festival
Queen
- 12) Confetti-Battle and selection
of Raffle

Arrangements had been made to have cut Narcissus flown from Switzerland to arrive on the Friday before the Festival. TWA and Air France both had offered to fly these flowers free of charge. So, a delegation of the Swiss Consulate, and from the Young Swiss Club, as well as representatives of the two Airlines assembled at Midway Airport to meet the arrival of the two planes. Unfortunately, bad weather conditions delayed the TWA flight, and only the flowers shipped via Air France arrived in time. At the last minute, plans to decorate the Hall with Narcissus had to be curtailed, since only 30 lbs of flowers were available for this purpose. The remaining 33 lbs arrived only after the Festival was over. Nevertheless, we had enough flowers to place some ~~for decorations over the Hall and still use~~ ~~more for decorations on each table in the~~ on each table in the Hall, and still use more for decorations all over. Soon, their fragrance could be detected even by a sinus-sufferer.

An article which appeared in the Chicago Daily News on May 15, gave some advance publicity to the efforts of the YSC., while the members of the Swiss Societies were advised through two separate mailings, of which also contained an application form for the Beauty Contest. Even though no effort was spared to attract all people in the Swiss Colony, to make sure that we would not perform to a small audience, the Festival was advertised through the Germania Radio Broadcast.

These combined efforts of our publicity department were crowned with great success.

People were streaming into the Hall, which was already full, and delayed the start of the program for half an hour. The audience enjoyed the entertainment immensely, there were no delays, no hitches, and the heavy hand of Henry Studer during the previous four weeks had not been in vain. After the first 10 numbers, a short intermission was made necessary to prepare for the highlight of the evening the election of the Narcissus Festival Queen. The judges had a hard decision to reach, and finally announced their selections for Queen: Miss Sylvia Kneubuhler

(Mrs. Dreyfus), with Mrs. Lorraine Joris and Jacqueline Huber (Mrs. Segesser), as runners-up in that order. Soon, after, everybody tried to find room on the crowded Dance Floor, and since no one was ready to leave at 2:30 AM., the band was asked to play for an additional hour, and were if not for police ordinances, the Party would have lasted to the morning.

As it was, the first Party ever organized by the Young Swiss Club for the public at large not only was a huge social success, but also financially rewarding. With the net gains of this party added to the meager treasury of the YSC., we suddenly found ourselves to be one of the more affluent of Swiss groups. This even though the proceeds of the raffle ticket sale was donated and used entirely for improvements in the Swiss Club House. The three Chandeliers now hanging along the Bar in the large Hall were purchased out of the proceeds and are a vivid testimony to the spirit of cooperation of the YSC. Tough, in the end, the Narcissus Festival became the pride and responsibility of every participating member, it is mainly due to the efforts of George Schreibke and Henry Studer that we owe the successful conclusion of this Great Festival. George's artistic stage setting, picturing the Castle of Chillon and the Dents du Midi, was reproduced on one of the early News Bulletins in black and white, as a kind of special memento for his efforts. It is sad that nothing of the sort was done to honor Henry Studer, without whose efforts the final outcome could have been disastrous. George Schreibke diplomatically coordinated the activities of the various committees, and it is to Hank Studer that he looked for assistance in his enormous task. Henry Studer was there when we needed a man who could whip everything into shape, who, with boundless energy, perfect example and even cajoling, was the Mr. Todt of our Festival. Even though tempers flared, nerves were frayed and the dress rehearsal the night before the Festival was a dismal flop, on the night it really counted, everybody was at its best, the program went off without a hitch and the performers were richly rewarded by continuous applause. Truly, the Narcissus Festival was, and remains, the number one manifestation of Chicago's Swiss Colony since World War II.

THE YSC. AND THE UNITED SWISS SOCIETIES

In the beginning, the YSC was organized to be strictly a social group, not guided by patriotic endeavors such as guided the other Societies. If we were going to sing, yodel, entertain or play cards and other games, we were merely going to do this as a matter of course, rather than of principle. It was in this vein that the first Constitution was written by R.E. Segesser, and eventually adopted by the membership on June 8, 1956. The only reference to the existing Societies was the pledge to work with these Societies whenever and wherever possible. As our activities and our membership grew, we became more and more involved with the other Societies and one of our members became President of the United Swiss Societies as a delegate from the Male Chorus, to which he also belonged. Pressure was exerted not only by some of our own members, but also by individuals and the various Societies for the Young Swiss Club to join them in the United Swiss Societies. Even as far back as 1956, when we first moved into our Rathskeller, there was talk about a possible future sale of the Club House, and it was pointed out to us that the YSC would participate in the then existing equity equally with all other Societies, if we were also members of the United Swiss Societies. The prospect of such a possible increase in our Treasury swayed even those of our members who cautioned the others, and who, rightly so, that we would soon be asked to actively participate in committee-work, festival organizations and other USS affairs. The decision was a crucial time for us. We had to consolidate our own membership to create an effective organization, to interest all new-comers in our activities, and had to contend with the problem of numerous departures which constantly depleted our ranks. Many members felt that joining the United Swiss Societies would weaken, rather than strengthen our position, because our efforts would be lead into opposite directions. After many discussions, the YSC applied for USS membership at the General Meeting of 1957. Ever since that time, individual members of our Club have been active in the USS. and soon practically every affair staged by the United Swiss Societies was entrusted to our organizational talents. The executive Committee of the parent organization for the past several years was composed of at least 50% of our members, and our Club has also been represented in the Board of Directors of the Swiss Club House.

It would seem that our efforts were appreciated by the majority of the older generation, but petty power politics soon discouraged some of the YSC., members, resulting in complete indifference among some of the leaders of our Club to the efforts of the old boys. It was evident that despite many well meaning people on both sides, the problems of the missing generation would only be solved by time or by threatening disaster. Thus, when the financial situation of the parent organization became more acute, more and more YSC. members lent a helping hand in many of the endeavors to stem the tide, and if not all differences have been resolved, the fact that the YSC is today very strongly represented in the USS and that three of the five Board of Directors Members are Young Swiss, reflects the cooperation of our Club. By this cooperation, we have shown that we recognize the importance of the parent organization in guiding the destiny of the entire Swiss Colony of Chicago to a brighter future.

LEADERS, HIGHLIGHTS, CRISES.

It is only fair to look back over the years, and give credit to the many members, who unselfishly, have devoted time and lots of work to their Club. Each one of them has, in his own way, put the stamp of their activity on the Club, and has made it a better one for all the members. After opening of the Rathskeller, the Club was directed by a group consisting of Dick Segesser, Jean-Pierre Laubscher, Gisele Kneubuhler and George Schreiber. Assisting them were Frank Holzner, Sonja Zubler, Hans Blaser and Ted Niggli. Noteworthy additions to the ranks of the leaders were Max Boetschi and Ralph Wyssling, Angela Willi, Ann and Rosemarie Werner, and later on Kurt Schnurrenberger, Walter Forster, Werner Gartner and Ursula Werth. We could go on and on and mention name after name, such as Fritz and Sylvia Siegfried, Kurt Matejka, Xavier Kaufmann, Desi De Perczel, Sofia and Susan Dettling, but the list would, in all fairness, have to include almost all of our members. Any omission should therefore be considered an oversight and we know that many more names will be added to this list in the future. A new era started when Max Boetschi, assisted by Angela Willi, took over the refreshment committee. Max's easy going nature and Angie's womanly touch soon made the bar the favorite hangout for all, and their combined effort contributed greatly to the increasing treasury of the Club.

When we moved into the Rathskeller, the long trend of financial setbacks suffered by the parent organization seemed to have been checked and at that time, there was talk of retiring the existing debts on the Clubhouse property out of accruing surplus. Unfortunately, the situation took a turn for the worse when our good friend Alex Niederer suddenly died. Alex had been Manager of the Swiss Club House for a good many years, and his vast circle of friends and his good relationship with the many organizations had resulted in full rental of the Halls and enough other business to assure at least a breakeven operation. With his untimely departure, it took only a few months to get the figures coming out red, and in the last few years, in spite of valiant efforts by everyone involved, the equity of all Swiss Societies was constantly diminished by the large deficits incurred. It is my personal opinion that the various factions who vied for control of the Club had a great deal to do with the turn of events, even though these people were, in their own way, as loyal to the cause as their counterparts.

No matter on which side of the fence one stood, it was apparent to all that we should work towards one goal, namely to give the Swiss Colony a new modern home in a better neighborhood in the future. Efforts to dispose of the Club House have been made for the past years, and for the United Swiss Societies to be prepared for such an event, the indebtedness of the property was centered in the hands of the Swiss Benevolent Society. All outstanding personal bonds have been paid back, the various Societies who owned bonds were also paid up, or donated their shares for the good of all. The planned urban renewal program of the present City Administration for the Near North Area has given rise to hopes that the Property would be condemned and adequate compensation would be forthcoming through this source. However, whatever fund were available after liquidation of the indebtedness would probably not be enough to buy land for a new Club House, and it is to the Swiss Benevolent Society that the Swiss Colony must turn to get the necessary funds for such a project. Years ago, the Swiss Benevolent Society was recipient of a large donation, which can only be used for an old age home for Swiss Citizens. Nothing could be nicer than combining both these worthwhile projects into one, with adequate facilities for recreation and a good, modern accommodation for older people, all under one roof.

It looks as though realizations of any future plans will have to await developments and it is therefore important for all members of the YSC to actively engage themselves in the leadership of their Club. This will enable them to acquire the necessary experience and to achieve a team spirit so necessary to bring this badly needed project to a successful conclusion. For, by the time this will take form, the present leaders of the Swiss Colony will largely have been replaced by the younger element, and it will be up to them to show a unity of purpose which has been, from the time of acquisition of the Club House to the present, so sadly lacking in the older organization.

While it is a tradition of all Swiss, wherever they may be, to show pride in their Country and especially in the democratic system evolved in the centuries of fighting tyranny and oppression, it is evident - in the light of what happened in our own Club - that it is not always easy to reconcile this built-in feeling of fair play towards all with the actual facts. Unwittingly, the Young Swiss Club found itself the center of a controversy that reached beyond the confines of the Swiss Colony in Chicago and brought the problems of segregation directly into our Rathskeller. Our invitations to the various parties and outdoor activities asked members to bring along their friends. One of our members invited his girl friend, a negro, to attend our outing on Lake Michigan, for which purpose we hired a Boat to spend an hour on the "high Seas". We then continued our program with dancing in the Rathskeller. There was no one objecting to this particular guest, no one even faintly thought the presence of this young lady offensive or strange. As a guest of one of our members, she was welcome. It may be important to note at this time that the Swiss Club House had long followed the policy of a restricted Club, reserving the right to refuse access to the property to anyone. This was a practice designed to protect the rights of any of its patrons, be they individuals or societies. Probably encouraged by his first success, our member wished to bring a larger group of his friends to one of our Fondue Parities, and it was then that strenuous protest were voiced on the part of our american-born members, especially the girls, who did not wish to be rude to any guests by declining to dance with them. In fairness to these members, to the policy of the Swiss Club House, and certainly in the interest of harmony, his request for tickets was denied, but not

before our group and this member had tried to reason this matter out. Inflexibility and a dogged attitude to our pleas for understanding and restraint seemed only to strengthen his determination to desegregate our Club. We were threatened with "exposure" in the Press, and his withdrawal of his membership from our Club was accepted. These actions by our Executive Committee were later fully sanctioned by all members, and the whole unfortunate affair made a part of our records. His treats were no idle words. Articles written by him were snapped up by the Swiss Press as sensational, and editorial comments regretted the undemocratic attitude of these "misguided" Swiss. Even the Nebelspalter, the famous satirical publication, took up the fight. An official inquiry was directed to the Consulate General by the Political Department in Berne. At this side, aside from inquiries by the voice of the N.A.C.P., a South Side Negro Newspaper to our President, which were all answered by a terse "no comment", nothing ever happened. It was unfortunate that this affair happened at the beginning of the trouble in the Belgian Congo, and public opinion in Switzerland was therefore easily swayed. It is regrettable, that no one bothered to check the source of the story, or verified it before it was printed in Switzerland. The comments in the Swiss Press were not only entirely uncalled for, but were uttered in complete ignorance of the situation. Actually, we all felt sorry for the misguided actions of our member, who, in order to prove himself to this new-found friends, lost most of his old friends in the Swiss Colony over a matter that could have and should have been solved by common sense.

While this was the only instance of dissent with our policies, we believe that fond memories will always be reserved to our Club by all former members who returned to Switzerland or moved on to greener pastures elsewhere. Certainly a living tribute to our great success are the many marriages which resulted from our activities. To mention a few: Jean-Pierre Laubscher and Sylvia Bachmann, Dick Segesser and Jacqueline Huber, Fritz Siegfried and Sylvia Volper, Georges Schreibeke and Marguerite Herrmann, Henry Sandmeier and Antoinette Schuetz, Claude Jaccard and Lydia Klopenstein, Kurt Schnurrenberger and Susan Dettling, Eugen Boller and Anita Gamper, Willy Kellenberger and Marilyn Schuepp, Irwin Bareiss and Doris Wicky, who all found romance leading to matrimony through the YSC. We believe that this alone would be justification for the existence of our fine group.

One of the important factors helping to develop a sense of unity, keeping all our members informed about our activities and giving each one a chance to express themselves, was our quarterly Newsbulletin. At the beginning, frequent announcements were sent out to inform our members of the goings-on, but soon, with better organization, the programs were formulated for 3 months at a time, which enable Dick Segesser to issue a Newsletter - which was a program of coming attractions, a review of earlier parties, and a gossip column of interest to all of our readers. It became apparent that the new edition was always eagerly awaited, and the News Bulletin became as traditional as our Fondue Parties. Willy Kellenberger, the present editor, has continued right on with the same type of informative and interesting News Bulletins and the continuity and improvement of this important part of our Clublife has been assured.

As a direct result of our helping to organize entertainment for the various manifestations of the Swiss Colony, a group of boys and girls under the direction of Sybil Spalinger, former choreographer and ballet teacher at the Stadttheater in Berne, appeared before a large audience in the Medinah Temple and the Sheraton Hotel on the occasion of the Swiss Singing Festival in Chicago in June of 1959. The enthusiastic performance at this occasion led to an invitation to appear on Bob Lewandowski's TV. Show, Polka-Go-Round, on August 3rd, 1959. The TV. debut of this group was a tremendous success and will always be remembered, especially by the participants.

There were many other memorable happenings, too numerous to mention in this short report. Presently, efforts are being made to form a Soccer Group, which, we hope, will eventually become one of the stronger teams in the Chicago Area, just like the Swiss Team in New York has become a perennial Championship threat in that league. And to think that the idea for this team was born out of the "clowning success" of a tie game with the Young Milwaukee players on the occasion of our visit at their annual picnic in 1960.

It has been a tremendous pleasure for me to reminisce while writing these happenings of the past, from the beginning to the present time. Having been associated with the Young Swiss Club since its inception, having nursed the idea of a strong association among ourselves in the face of many adversities, rejoiced at the many successes we had, I

am deeply grateful for the many friends I have

been privileged to make, and if, during my tenure as President of our Club, I may have stepped on some toes, I am sure that for these trespasses I have also been forgiven.

It is up to you to gather from this the answer to the question of when the Young Swiss Club actually started. But, looking back, I believe that the start occurred when we were united in a single purpose by the plight of Albert Baettig. I therefore dedicate this early history to the memory of Albert Baettig and Sylvia Zubler, our dear departed, and hope that the future will be written by our present leadership and all our members in even more glorious colors. The Club is here for you, and the more efforts you have put in it yourself, the more you will get out of it. I know, because it has given me more than I ever dreamed possible.

R.E. (Dick) Segesser

MW Feb. 1964