



"Helvetia"

SOCIETY FOR COLLECTORS OF SWITZERLAND

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Editor, Harlan F. Stone, 48 Division Ave.
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PHILATELIC CALENDAR

- March 9-11 -- Helvetia exhibit in BEPEX club competition, Garden State Plaza, Routes 4 and 17, Paramus, N.J.
- March 21 ---- Helvetia Society monthly meeting, Fair Lawn Arts Center, 12-56 River Road, Fair Lawn, N.J., 8 p.m. Program: Strubeli issues of 1854-62, different printings and color varieties illustrated on slides by Werner Vogel. All members will bring their Strubeli stamps.
- March 30 ---- SASS New York Chapter monthly meeting, Collectors Club of New York, 22 E. 35th St., NYC, 8 p.m. Program: international postage due system illustrated on Swiss covers by Werner Elias.
- April 15 ---- SASS regional meeting hosted by Helvetia at SOJEX, Atlantic City, N.J.

200+ LOTS FOR HELVETIA AUCTION

Helvetia President Steve Pomex, manager of the first Helvetia auction scheduled for May 16, reports that collectors have submitted more than 200 lots. The material includes a NABA souvenir sheet, pre-stamp covers, early proofs and philatelic literature. The auction catalog, which Steve and Vice President Walter Reimann are preparing, will be distributed as part of the April issue of this newsletter. Walter will conduct the auction at Helvetia's regular meeting place, the Fair Lawn Arts Center, 12-56 River Road, Fair Lawn, N.J., at 8 p.m.

STAMP FOR AGASSIZ?

The Postmaster General has been asked to issue a commemorative stamp in honor of Louis Agassiz, the Swiss-American teacher and scientist, on Aug. 12, 1973, the 100th anniversary of the Anderson School of Natural History, which Agassiz founded. The Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass., will sponsor the anniversary observance of the school that was the forerunner of all fresh water and marine laboratories in North America. The Helvetia Society plans to write a letter endorsing the stamp. Other collectors wishing to support the proposal should also write the Postmaster General.

NEW MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Helvetia member Ed Hochuli has enabled the society to obtain 1,100 membership cards at a very advantageous price. New members will receive their cards shortly.

SWISSAIR'S SILVER JUBILEE OF THE "CIPEX FLIGHT"
Philately's Most Exciting Inaugural To Be Marked in 1972
By Ernest A. Kehr
(Continued from last month)

But now to return to the 1947 journey itself.

The passenger list would be limited to specially invited guests, all officials directly concerned with the exhibition or the flight:

Hans E. Gaudard, head of the Swiss PTT Printing Plant and author of several important philatelic reference works, and his wife, Trudy.

Joseph Diener, head of the Postal Transportation Division, PTT.

Fritz Tuescher of the PTT's Materials and Technical Service. Jules Hagnauer, an assistant to Mr. Gaudard and then curator of the Postal-Philatelic Museum's collections. (He now is with the Universal Postal Union, following retirement from the PTT.)

Alfred Matter, head of the International Mail Division, PTT. Prof. Eduard Amstutz, Vice-Chairman of Swissair's Board of Directors.

Col. Louis Clerc, Director of the Swiss Federal Air Office. Rene Thiebaud of the same office.

Eugen Groh, then Commercial Director of Swissair.

Hans Nicole, now Assistant Chief of Swissair Operations.

Alphonse Ehinger, a member of the Board of Directors.

Vido Rigassi, representing Swiss Radio.

Dr. Siegfried Frey, Director of the Swiss Telegraph Agency.

Dr. H. H. Heimann of "Interavia."

The crew comprised Capt. Bert Foulds of the Douglas Aircraft Company, Capts. Walter Borner and Anton von Tscharner of Swissair, Engineer Arnold Schilling, Radio Operators Werner Wegmann and Paul Auberson, and Navigators Charles Haas and Albin Brodecky (of the U.S.). Fridolin Meier and Max Hintermann were stewards, and Emilie Schneider, hostess.

Cointrin Airport was in a gala mood on that night of Thursday, May 1. The guests had assembled for refreshments and farewells to relatives, friends and visitors that had gathered for the auspicious take-off. The shining plane glistened in the floodlights, standing ready at the ramp, its cargo hold filled with 3,300 pounds of souvenir covers.

In a specially prepared "safe" in the cabin were 308 pounds of waterproof cases containing the philatelic treasures from Bern. Added to that, the passengers' baggage and some special cargo, the total payload weighed in at 7,612 pounds.

Punctually as one minute past midnight ushered May 2 into the calendar and the distinguished party had climbed the boarding stairs and settled in the cabin, the metal bird taxied to the runway, revved its four engines and took off over Lake Lemman (Geneva) and the snow-covered Alps, then headed for Shannon, Stephenville and New York.

Mr. Lichtenstein had passed away in February, so he never did witness the culmination of his dreams of two years earlier.

It had been our privilege to serve as Vice President of CIPEX for public relations, but it was chiefly because of our association with the Swiss that the organizing committee invited me to handle details of the meeting, welcoming and transportation of the delegation to its Manhattan hotel.

The U.S. Post Office Department and the U.S. Customs Service already had been alerted and stood ready for appropriate clearance and the backstamping of the more than one and a half tons of first flight mail.

Werner Hirs of the Swiss Consulate General and Mr. Pillichody were to handle the official matters. The latter, however, was abed with the flue so could not be at La Guardia Airport for the actual arrival. Everything had been planned and prepared. All was in complete readiness.

But, "Man proposes, God disposes."

The flight had been scheduled to take approximately 28 hours for the crossing to the shores of Bowery Bay on Long Island's north shore. Anticipated headwinds did not materialize over the ocean so the ETA was advanced several hours. The city's weather had been miserable for a few days: overcast, rainy and often heavily be-fogged. Certainly it was not fit condition for air travel.

In the morning we called traffic control, were told that the plane had left Stephenville and was due over La Guardia six hours hence. Prospects seemed dim, but a more certain weather prediction could not be given until much later. Three hours after that, with still no break in the rainy fog, we made the trip to La Guardia for the arrival. On getting to the Marine Terminal it was pouring rain and visibility was down to zero. While a few domestic DC-3 flights were allowed to come into the main terminal, Traffic Control assured us that the chances of bringing a four-engine DC-4 were virtually nil. They said that the plane would be put into a holding pattern upon arrival overhead, but that it would be probable that a more likely diversion would be necessary.

What to do? We finally decided that we'd head back to Manhattan, get a bite to eat and be ready to leave for an alternate landing site as soon as we knew whether it would be Boston or Washington.

Another call to Traffic Control and we were told that the plane would be "held" for about an hour as a matter of routine, then dispatched to Washington unless some meteorological miracle happened. "Right now it looks like Washington, so your best bet will be to go there," Traffic Control said.

We got to Union Station and across the capital to the National Airport in Virginia just as the plane was coming to the ramp and its fatigued passengers started coming down the stairs.

No one had bothered to notify either Customs or the U.S.

Post Office Department, so while the delegation was escorted to a waiting room (and some off-duty personnel hustled up coffee) we hurriedly called. Almost an hour later a couple of inspectors came over, cleared the guests and their bags. There was a momentary shock when they read the manifest with its listing of "postage stamps" valued at five million Swiss francs, but that was straightened out. In the meantime, we reached Greever Allen of the P.O.D., and as was his wont, he made immediate arrangements for their proper back-stamping in Washington and subsequent shipment to New York.

By the time the airport formalities were completed, the last of the railroad's good service had departed and only a milk train was left. The Sunday sun already had broken across the foggy Manhattan skyline when the weary, disheveled group piled into taxicabs for the ride across town to the Commodore Hotel and some much needed sack time.

The party and its precious philatelic cargo were in New York. But that was only the beginning. Once the Swiss had recuperated, it was necessary to visit the Customs House to clear the mechanical table that had been freighted by ship. As a mechanical device, inspectors insisted on charging duty for it, even though we made it clear that it was solely for a 10-day exhibition and would be returned to Bern before the month's end. It took a bit of persuasion, but we solved that problem by posting a \$7,500 bond pending exportation.

During the days before Grand Central Palace was ready to allow installation of the CIPEX exhibits, the plane made a series of flights around eastern United States and Canada that guests might see the land, and residents of other cities might see the aircraft itself. The Swiss were back in New York by May 14 and ready to set up their fantastic displays. We left them at the areas assigned and went to take care of some important (and somewhat neglected) publicity projects.

We'd barely reached our Long Island home and collapsed into bed when the telephone rang. It was Ernst Muller, the Basel stamp dealer, calling from the Chalet Suisse restaurant.

"It's absolutely imperative that you get here right away, The Swiss delegation is on the verge of pulling out of the show," he told me excitedly.

Upon arrival at the popular restaurant -- it was two or three o'clock in the morning -- we found the officials in a state of indignant outrage. It seems that just as they began to set up the displays, a union delegate bluntly informed them that no one without a union card could lift a finger within Grand Central Palace.

The Swiss agreed to hire qualified mechanics, electricians and glaziers, but none could be found to install the complicated, automated electrical equipment of the moving table. That didn't bother the union leader. "Your own technicians can do the work, but you'll have to pay our men for every hour your men work." The very idea of featherbedding at exorbitant overtime wages was so repugnant that the Swiss decided they'd not be blackmailed, but would withdraw rather than pay the tribute. The thousands of dollars it would cost simply wasn't in the already heavy budget.

The mood of the Swiss was tense, the atmosphere charged as

Consul Hirs and Mr. Muller cajoled the visitors. Having promised to participate and gone so far, it seemed unwise to withdraw at this point. It was long past normal closing time of the Chalet when finally it was agreed that the extra money should be paid and the installation work resumed later in the morning. While seven Swiss toiled to make up for the lost time, seven union men sat nearby playing cards!

And worthwhile it was.

Both the Court of Honor and Moving Table displays upstairs constantly were crowded to make them among the highlights of the show. Spectacular is about the only adjective for it all. Those who saw it need nothing to recall what was on view. No wordage would be completely believed by those who missed it.

When the show was over and the treasures repacked, a formal dinner was staged at the Commodore as a farewell gathering for the delegation and a few Americans who had helped the project, and in the morning the Swiss got ready for the flight home. Just less than a month after it had started in Geneva, that exciting inaugural flight was being completed.

As its business developed, Swissair increased and improved its trans-Atlantic services. As new aircraft were designed and built, the line acquired fleets of them to operate passenger, mail and cargo transport facilities. The DC-6's and DC-7's came and served, but eventually were replaced by the larger, faster and more comfortable DC-8's and, early in 1971, by the Boeing 747 Jumbo Jets.

When international operations were moved from the antiquated and cramped facilities of La Guardia Airport's Marine Terminal to Idlewild (later re-named JFK International Airport), Swissair was one of the first foreign carriers to erect its own maintenance hanger and commissary on the south shore of the island, just a short two miles from the Atlantic's oceanic expanses.

Also within the same brief 25 years, other routes were inaugurated -- to South America, Africa and Asia -- so that it is now possible to take a Swissair plane from the United States and Canada and get as far as Singapore, Tokyo or Johannesburg by direct service with only transfer, fuel and rest stops. The line presently flies to 79 cities in 55 different nations of the globe.

The End

NEWS BRIEFS

BEPEX has made arrangements for William Aronson of Teaneck, N. J., to write a weekly philatelic column for The Record, the leading daily newspaper in Bergen County. All future Helvetia newsletters and news releases will go to Mr. Aronson.

Members of the New York Chapter of SASS who find an "x" on the upper left corner of this newsletter must pay their \$3 dues for 1972 at once if they wish to receive future copies with meeting notices. Dues checks should go to the chapter secretary, Dr. Max Schneck, 838 Pelhamdale Ave., New Rochelle, N.Y. 10801.