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NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND ★ ★ ★

PROFESSOR AUGUSTE PICCARD

Professor Auguste Piccard died at Lausanne recently at the age of 78. "The Times" writes:

Auguste Piccard was one of twin sons born at Basle on January 28, 1884, to Jules Piccard, head of the Department of Chemistry at the University of Basle, by his wife Helene (nee Haltenhoff). The other twin, christened Jean Felix, has likewise won distinction in science; and over considerable periods of their lives the careers of the brothers ran parallel. Both had their schooling at the Ober Realschule, Basle; both went, in 1902, to the Swiss Institute of Technology, at Zurich, and both graduated in 1907—Auguste in mechanical engineering and Jean Felix in chemical engineering. Both brothers stayed on at the institute to carry out research for the degree of D.Sc. Auguste remained there as a teacher until 1922, for the last two years as Professor of Physics.

Both Auguste and Jean became keenly interested in the possibilities of lighter-than-air flight, and in 1913 they made together a 16-hour flight from Zurich by balloon, passing over large areas of Germany and France. In 1915, mobilised for service in the Swiss army, they chose the balloon section. Auguste gave up his post at the Swiss Institute of Technology in 1922 on appointment as Professor of Physics at the Institute Polytechnique in the University of Brussels. He kept in close touch with his brother (who, after teaching at Munich and Lausanne, continued his professional career in the United States). As early as 1926 Auguste had conceived the idea of a high balloon ascent, to be undertaken for the purpose of making scientific observations, and within the next few years he began to make experiments for the production of the best type of gondola.

During 1930 Auguste Piccard evolved an airtight gondola, lifted by a hydrogen-filled balloon, and by May of the following year all was ready for an attempt on the stratosphere. On the 27th, with an assistant, Paul Kipfer, he took off from Augsburg, Bavaria, and achieved a height of 15,281 metres, easily beating the existing record, and descended safely at Ober-Gurgl. A further and more elaborate attempt followed quickly. This time Piccard used an aluminium globe-shaped cabin, with oxygen equipment, furnishing it with the necessary apparatus for the making of scientific observations, the total weight being 850 lb, lifted by a gas-filled balloon of 33 yards diameter. On August 18, 1932, Piccard, accompanied by his Belgian collaborator, Max Cosyns, ascended from Zurich to a height of more than 16,201 metres. These flights not only showed that it was possible to travel in the stratosphere, but furnished valuable scientific data concerning radioactivity, atmospheric electricity, and the cosmic rays. They led Piccard to make the prophecy of very fast strato-

spheric flights between Europe and America, and the Belgian Aero Club recognised his achievement by the award of its gold medal.

Work In the War

Piccard escaped the onrush of the Germans in 1940 and during the period of the Second World War worked in the Swiss aluminium industry, designing precision instruments for physicists. When the war was over he returned to his chair at Brussels, and he now turned his attention from the upper air to the ocean. His ambition was to beat William Beebe's 1934 record of 3,028ft for an oceanic descent, to investigate conditions at great depths, to take photographs, and, if possible, to catch some of the fish which live at the deep levels. He designed a special form of diving bell which he called a "bathyscaphe." It consisted of a steel, watertight cabin hung from a box-shaped hydrostat filled with heptane, a form of aviation petrol. He planned to descend by the weight of scrap metal and to raise the bathyscaphe again by the use of the heptane. An attempt was made near Dakar, West Africa, in October, 1948, but Piccard found great difficulty both in launching and recovering the sphere, and had to abandon the project without having carried out his aims.

Five years later, however, Piccard and his son Jacques, a former assistant professor of economics at Geneva, took the bathyscaphe, Trieste, down 1,732 fathoms (10,392ft)—then the greatest depth ever reached by a living man—in the Tyrrhenian pit off Capri.

This record was beaten early in 1954 by two French naval officers who went down more than 2,200 fathoms (13,200ft). But in January, 1960, the record was regained in a bathyscaphe of his design which was piloted by Jacques Piccard and Lieutenant Don Walsh, an American submarine officer, to a depth of 35,800ft in the Marianas Trench off Guam.

In 1956 Auguste Piccard's account of his various exploits was published in English, *In Balloon and Bathyscaphe*. He had retired from his chair in Brussels in 1945.

In 1920 Piccard married Marianne Denis. There were one son and four daughters of the marriage.

—THE SWISS OBSERVER

SEVEN-MILE LONG "LACTODUCT"

In the district of Sanetsch (Valais), the finishing touches are just being put to a 7-mile long lactoduct. Thanks to this new milk pipeline, the 2,700 odd quarts of milk produced daily in the mountain pastures of this Alpine region will take only one hour to reach the plain, where they will be converted into cheese or despatched immediately to big consumer centres.

FIRST TWO SWISS COLD STORAGE SHIPS

At the end of March and in the middle of May, the St. Gothard Shipping Company Ltd., of Chur, took delivery at Rotterdam of two ocean-going ships, the Calanca and the Castaneda, ordered from a Dutch shipyard. These sister ships are the first cold storage vessels to sail under the Swiss flag. They have an overall length of 2740 feet, a total displacement of 1717 tons for a draught of 15ft 9in, and their cold storage holds, kept at a temperature of minus 20 degrees Centigrade, have a capacity of 95,440 cu. ft.; their cruising speed is 14 knots.

These two additions to Switzerland's ocean-going merchant fleet are managed by the Swiss-Overseas Shipping Co. Ltd., which already handles six Swiss ships, the Anunciada, Allobrogia, Ariana, Castagnola, Rhone and Rhine.

DEATH OF EMINENT ECONOMIST

Mr Gottlieb Duttweiler, whose fame had spread far beyond Switzerland's frontiers, died on June 8th, 1962. The deceased had made a name for himself in particular by his rationalisation of retail trade. It was he too, who introduced the first self-service stores into Switzerland. The firm he created, starting with a few mobile shops in the backs of converted vans, now has a turnover of over a billion S.Fr., possesses 532 sales points and several factories. It represents a cooperative organisation of 585,630 members and carries out its activities in the most varied fields: retail trade, petrol refinery and distribution, tourism, adult education, culture, etc.; it even publishes its own daily newspaper.

NEW WATCH-CLEANING MACHINE

A new, entirely automatic watch-cleaning machine has just been placed on the market by a Swiss manufacturer. The whole cleaning cycle consists of five operations automatically following each other in a closed circuit: one cleaning, three rinsing and one drying. The time of the cleaning operation can be set to last from 8 to 12 minutes; the heating of the first bath is regulated by means of a thermostat and all containers are hermetically sealed, so as to reduce evaporation in the workshop to a minimum and thus avoid any danger of fire if the liquids used are volatile.

The basket in which the parts to be cleaned are placed is moved around in the cleaning liquid, which is supplied to the cleaning jar by a special pneumatic system. Between each cycle the liquids are carefully decanted so as to avoid any dirt removed by the cleaning from getting up intot the jar. The apparatus is extremely simple to operate; it is very stable and weighs only 57lb complete. In order to increase the efficiency of cleaning, it is possible to add an ultra-sound generator by fixing its head, which transmits the vibrations, to the cleaning jar.

CALORIES BY THE BILLION

Between the 1st of July, 1960, and the 30th of June, 1961, Swiss agriculture produced 3,770 billion calories' worth of foodstuffs, enabling it to meet 57 per cent of the country's needs.

In the following fields it is almost in a position to satisfy the whole national consumption requirements: potatoes, fruit juices, veal, pork, milk for the consumer market, skim milk powder, cheese, cream and animal fat.

GARBAGE INCINERATING PLANT FOR FRANKFURT

The town of Frankfurt on Main has ordered a garbage incinerating plant from the Swiss firm von Roll in Zurich. The first stage in the construction of this plant consists of two ovens with a nominal capacity of a total of 600 tons of garbage in 24 hours. The second stage comprises two extra ovens, which will make it possible to incinerate 1200 tons of garbage a day.

This garbage disposal plant is to be combined with a heating plant. The heat recuperated from the incinerating plant will be supplied in the form of steam to the heating plant and converted into electricity for the heating of some 6,500 apartments connected to the system.

NEW SWISS WRIST-CHRONOGRAPH

A watch factory at Bienne possessing over a hundred years' experience in the manufacture of chronographs and timers, recently placed on the market a new wrist-chronograph specially designed to meet the needs of flyers, divers, sportsmen and engineers. Autavia, as this watch is called, is remarkable for the perfect legibility of its dial and its numerous new possibilities of use. Two models are available, one with a 12-hour totaliser (3 white recorders on a black ground), the other with a 30-minute totaliser (2 white recorders on a black ground). The stainless steel case has been specially designed to protect the movement perfectly not only at an altitude of 33,000 feet, but also at a depth of 3,300 feet under the sea; it is also guaranteed to keep out water and dust and prevent condensation and the formation of vapour. A revolving rim, on the outside of the case, makes it possible to read simultaneously the time in two different timing zones or to record a specified time in advance: in flying, for example, the time of passing a given place, the time of landing, etc., or in under-water exploration, the diving time, oxygen reserve, etc. The 17-jewel movement is provided with a shock absorber; it is antimagnetic, proofed against changed in temperature and possesses an unbreakable spring.

OVER 22 MILLION FOREIGN MOTOR VEHICLES

According to official statistics, approximately 22.25 million foreign motor vehicles entered Switzerland in 1961, which represents an increase of roughly 14 per cent over the figure for the previous year. The increase mainly concerned motor cars and lorries, whereas the number of motor coaches showed only a slight increase of less than 5 per cent. Entries of motorcycles on the other hand decreased by about 3 per cent.

Laugh a little . . .

"Just have a look how carefully this man drives his car. He must be a beginner."

"Oh no! But he has paid cash for his car."

* * *

A young man to his fiancee: "It will seem quite funny, when we will be married and I suddenly do not have to bring flowers to anyone!"

* * *

A visitor from the West asks a youngster from East Berlin: "What would you do if the east-west wall were to suddenly collapse?"

"I'd quickly climb a tree."

"Well, of all things . . . Why that?"

"Do you think I want to be trampled to death?"

* * *

"Since the Browns have lost their fortune, they have also lost half their friends."

"And the other half?"

"They do not yet know that they have lost it."

—*From* NEBELSPALTER

● RECIPE

SWISS SAGE "KUECHLI"

7 ozs. flour, about 1 cup of white wine, 2-3 eggs, 1 tablespoon oil, fresh large sage leaves with a good bit of stem on them, salt, hot oil or fat for deep frying.

Put 2 or 3 egg yolks, 1 tablespoon oil and salt into the flour and by and by add warmed white wine so that mixture becomes just thickly flowing. Leave standing for a while. Before deep frying add stiffly whipped egg whites. Steep cleanly washed and dried sage leaves into batter, holding the stems and deep fry a golden yellow. Serve hot, sprinkled with sugar. This is a real, old fashioned Swiss speciality. Sage = Salbei.

—*From* WELTWOCHE