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Obituaries

"Sepp" Joseph Alois Kiser

14-08-1926 ~ 19-08-2012



Joe / Sepp was the third of seven children born in Ramersberg, Obwalden in Switzerland. His parents were farmers. Sadly, Joe / Sepps' father died when he was only 9 ½ years old, and continuing the farming operation was left to his mother and the children. Joe / Sepp milked cows before and after school. He left school at the age of 14 years and worked on a neighbour's farm. Shortly after the war ended Joe / Sepp worked with the railways, digging a second tunnel between Brunnen and Sisikon. He then worked up on the Alps for three summers milking thirty cows by hand and making butter and cheese. And in winter, for 5 ½ years in between milking, he worked in a forest cutting, with an axe, branches off trees that had been chopped down.

In 1954 Joe / Sepp married Emmi Kiser, also from Ramersberg (they were neighbours). They had three children Erwin, Edith and Mark and continued the farming life for eight years. In May 1962, they left Switzerland for a slow six week journey on a boat to the other side of the world to New Zealand.

They were greeted in Wellington by Emmi's sister and brother-in-law Agnes and Adolf Hardegger, then made their way to Taranaki together. They started as farm workers in Hawera for two years, then sharemilkers for seven years. During this time, their fourth child Susie was born. They ventured on to leasing a farm on Maata Road, Eltham for one year, before purchasing it in 1971. In 1973, they made improvements to the woolshed on the farm and turned it into the Swiss Club house and a nine-pin bowling alley was made. Many events were held there, including schwingenfests and lots of the famous schnapps was consumed until the wee hours of the morning. In 1975 Sepp and Emmi made a return visit to Switzerland with their youngest child. They farmed their Eltham property for 15 years before son Erwin sharemilked, then purchased it. Sepp, Emmi and Mark purchased a farm on Rawhitiroa Road and in later years put a sharemilker on. They then went to live on their dry-stock farm at Pukengahu for nine years. About seven years ago, a campervan was purchased and the three of them were lucky enough to travel virtually the whole of New Zealand. A few years ago, it was decided to scale down and sell the dairy farm. After two minor strokes last year, Joe / Sepp said it was time to sell the run-off so they decided to purchase a house in Hawera.

Joe / Sepp and Emmi have 14 grandchildren and have had three wonderful trips back to Switzerland together during their fifty years of living in New Zealand.

Sepp had always been an avid shooter ... regularly competing in the small bore and karabiner programmes held by the Taranaki Swiss Club. He spent many hours signaling scores at the Karabiner rifle range. Sepp always enjoyed keglen and consistently scored very well, winning the trophy many times. The litres of schnapps that Sepp provided to the Swiss Club have never been counted ... but I'm sure that it would run into the hundreds!!! Sepp and Emmi seldom missed a Club function or event, joined all our bus trips away and took part in the 'trachtentanz' group while it was active. Sepp and Emmi have both always been very loyal, dedicated, generous and supportive members of our Club, and we hope to continue seeing Emmi at our future functions. Several years ago, Sepp was honoured to become the Patron of our Club. Sepp thoroughly deserved this accolade, and we will miss his friendly, smiling face.

The Taranaki Swiss Club and the Swiss Society of New Zealand extend their sincere sympathy to Emmi, Erwin, Edith, Mark, Susie and families on the sad passing of Sepp.