



# SWISS SOCIETY BANGKOK

c/o Embassy of Switzerland, G.P.O. Box 821, Bangkok 10501, Thailand

## SSB Newsletter December 2018 – Happy New Year!

### Dear members of the Swiss Society

In this newsletter you will find more information about SSB's past and future events.

Besides the well-received discussions with VIPs during our Get Togethers, we started with inviting the "future VIPs", young Swiss, to share their ideas for a career in Thailand, their first successes but also the problems. SSB gets apparently more attractive for younger members. The teenagers and the young at heart enjoyed the pool party of-

ferred to us by our new member **Andreas Rellstab**.

With the trip to the elephant festival in Surin, an old tradition of weekend events was revived. We followed an invitation of our member **Kurt Amstad** in Surin, The trip was managed by our member **Marc Werder**. As you can read below, it was a success. The thanks are extended to both.

Once again the traditional Raclette event took place in the garden of the residences of our ambassador Ivo Sieber. Big thanks to him and his wife Gracita.

For the second time our Christmas Brunch took place in the Brasserie 9. Over 20 children in the "Kindergarten age" enjoyed Santa Clause, probably the only one in Bangkok with a real beard. The adults enjoyed the delicious buffet. The event was «fully booked» only a few days after it was published. Therefore, we already discussed how to host more participants next year.

The 5th Jass tournament, organized by our member **Stefan Kuhn** with a growing number of participant - even coming from far away, is already a traditional event.

We terminated the 2018-GeTogethers with an event concerning the German speaking School "RIS Swiss Section", informing us about the plans of the extension of their infrastructure. This is required due to the increasing number of Students.

In "Taskforce Archive", **Werner Schaeppi** and **Andreas Mikes** are digging through many boxes of old documents. Many interesting stories already popped up. There will be an event in 2019 when they will inform and some digitized documents will be made available to the public!

Also this year, the long overdue recertification of the Swiss Society Bangkok was completed. This was a huge job done by **Thomas Gerber**, his Secretary **Khun Ploenta** and our lawyer **Khun Dhira**. Many thanks to them. The team for the next recertification which should be done every 3 years is already warming up.

Currently we are in the preparation of the program for the coming year. During our last Committee meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup> 2018, we did a brainstorming session for future events. For the appreciated GetTogether - with increasing number of participants - there will be many new topics. Company visits and weekend event are in the pipeline as well. The program will be elaborated during our next meeting in January. We will provide more information during our AGM on March 13<sup>th</sup> 2019.

On November 30<sup>th</sup> the Swiss Society Bangkok organized the yearly presidents meeting of the Swiss Associations in Thailand. Delegations from Chiang Mai, Phuket and Koh Samui attended. Also present were our colleagues from Hua Hin, where a new "Swiss Club" is about to be chartered. As was already stated last year, the member structures are too different for joint activities, but the exchange of experiences give valuable input for the future to all participants.

To further distribute the work and the tasks among more members in the SSB committee, we are looking for new active members. During our November meeting, Guido Riva started his work as second secretary.



**Guido Riva** lives in Pattaya. He is early retired and still full of energy. Originally, he is from Basel, served many years in the police and was member of several sport organizations, such as Shooting Clubs, and still today he is in the jury of international Shooting contests.

We are very happy that another two members showed interest to join the committee – we will inform later – unfortunately, no ladies showed interest until now.

Last but not least, we thank our supporters and sponsors, namely **Ivo Sieber** and **Wilfried Schnider** with their team from the embassy for constant support, **John Hauenstein**, our photographer who comes to many events from Chiang May, **Thomas** and **René** from Chesa restaurant and **Linus Knobel** from BAC for hosting and sponsoring our events.

I am looking forward to many more shared moments.

André Graber  
(President SSB)



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Embassy of Switzerland in Thailand





## Our Events and GetTogethers

### October 16<sup>th</sup>: "Sächsilüte"

Over 30 members joined this GetTogether, to listen to Luca Sigg's speech about "Sechseläuten". The "Sechseläuten" (Zürich German: "Sächsilüte") is a traditional spring ceremony in the Swiss city of Zürich celebrated in its current form, usually on the 3rd Monday of April, since the early 20th century.



tolled at six o'clock. "Sechseläuten" is a Swiss German word that literally translates into "The six o'clock ringing of the bells". Changing to summer working hours traditionally was a joyous occasion because it marked the beginning of the season where people had some non-working daylight hours.

The roots of the festival go back to medieval times when the first day of summer working hours was celebrated in the guildhalls across the city.

City ordinances strictly regulated the length of the working day in that era. During the winter semester the workday in all workshops lasted as long as there was daylight, but during the summer semester (i.e. starting on Monday following vernal equinox) the law proclaimed that work must cease when the church bells

Burnings of "Böögg" figures (the Swiss German term for "bogey", in origin scary-looking ragdolls) in spring are attested in various places of the city from the late 18th and early 19th century, without direct connection to the "Sechseläuten".

The combination of the "Sechseläuten" parade and the burning of an official "Böögg" was introduced in 1902. But still today the guilds accept only men as members. There is a lady-guild, but they are not allowed to join the official parade.....



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### November 3<sup>rd</sup> : EPIC Pool Party

For the second time, SSB members were allowed free entrance and a free drink to the EPIC pool party in the Marriott Marques at Sukhumvit 22. Once again, it was a successful event where our members had fun. The weather was gorgeous, the mood was great. The invitation for the next



party next year will follow. Competition is open, who will be on the next picture?



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## November 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> Elefant Breakfast Surin:

Elephant Festival Surin 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Our journey started with three minivans that looked like a convoy. We stopped in Nakhon Ratchasim

The nearly 1 km long buffet for the around 300 elephants (babies and animals at all ages and sizes) was an eye catcher for the audience. The gray giants enjoyed the pineapples, bananas, melons and all kinds of vegetables.

for an early dinner at 5pm at Andy's place. Regina with Reini joined the excursion with their private driver and already arrived at the restaurant "Chez Andy" at lunch time. Andy is living in Thailand for more than thirty years and spoiled us with an autumn like "Rindspfeffer" and other delicious food.

After dinner the group continued their journey and arrived – tired but happy - three hours later in the comfortable new hotel Slive, situated in the town center of Surin. In the hotel lobby they were welcomed by Marc and Kurt, the local organizers of this excursion. They informed us about the program of the coming days.



Swiss Restaurant «Chez Andy» Korat

After this buffet spectacle, we individually strolled around the small town with numerous temples, had street lunch somewhere on our way back to the hotel, followed by a relaxing siesta. Then we went by minivan to Ampon Lake and the project "Kingsplace" which was

initiated by a granddaughter of the former King Bhumibol. There was a large lake with a dam providing water for the town and numerous rice fields. The project is supporting sustainable and organic research for plants. Many buildings were not yet completed, but it was obvious that this will happen soon. The scenery with the wonderful landscape was amazing. Kurt, living with his family in the area, explained us that thanks to this project a lot of people got new jobs. This is very important as the rice farmers cannot afford to fully support the needs of their families with the production of rice only. Sometimes the kids of the farmers work in Bangkok and send additional money to support the rice farmers.



It was a pleasure to see Werner Schaeppi as well joining the group (24 persons) on Friday morning where we went to the famous elephant breakfast buffet. Some group members went there by fully loaded tuk tuk or by foot.

This excursion was followed by a dinner in a great Thai restaurant with live music. Everybody enjoyed the delicious food in a pleasant social atmosphere.

On Saturday morning we left at 8am by van to the Surin arena which was built only for the purpose of the elephant festival. The highest representative of the province from the Thai parliament and the minister of culture joined the festival and honored the five oldest "elephant catchers"; the oldest one was 89 years old. These men catch wild elephants and then domesticate and train these wonderful animals.



The 3-hours elephant show presented in total nine scenes of Siam history, showing the role and the importance of the elephants within the different time periods. More than 1,500 extras and 100 elephants partici-





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pated at this impressive performance. There was enough time during the spectacle to have a short walk outside the stadium to see the additional stands and performances around the arena and enjoy some drinks and food.

After an individual lunch and siesta time, we left at 4pm to a small village to the frontier province Tennmii. Marc expected the group at the dam and guided them to the home of Kurt where everybody was warmly welcomed. Kurt and a local rubber farmer explained and showed us the rubber production next to his house. The rubber farmers have to work at night, as the day temperatures are too hot to collect the sticky liquid. The farmers work then with head lamps and boots in order to be protected from snakes. 500g to 1kg of rubber are collected from one tree after 8 nights. One kilo of rubber can be sold at around 20 THB, but the price is quite variable depending on the demand, so the rubber farmers need additional activities to earn their living.



Kurt and his family and friends of the village offered at the beginning of a very nice evening a refreshing Apérol Spritz, followed by a generous BBQ with an excellent selection of food accompanied by wine and beer.

Marc, Linda (spouse of Stephane who joined the group) and the wife of Kurt were cooking and serving huge quantities of tasty delicacies during the whole evening.

The excursion was unique in many respects and the organization was top. Happy and satisfied participants made their way back home by minivan on Sunday morning. Some participants made drove on an individual way and four participants went on to a circuit around Thailand to their next destination. The 16 passengers of the minivans drove to Kao Yai to the Ribs Mann, around 2



kilometers from the main road, where André, the SSB President, who unfortunately couldn't participate at this excursion, expected them. André offered a white wine aperitif and the group had the occasion to taste the locally produced smoked meet products. After this short

two-hours-brake the minivans drove back to Bangkok where they deposited the participants at 9pm in Ek-kamai, where the tour started a few days ago.

This wonderful weekend without rain will remain in our memories. We are all looking forward to the new tours from the SSB next year.



Marc Werder, organization and John Hauenstein pictures.

## November 20<sup>th</sup>: Multi Media





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**Regula Schmiedhauser** lives since 2012 in Bangkok and works as Blogger for an international company. She gave us an overview of the significance of multimedia in the world, Thailand and

Switzerland. Worldwide 3.4 Billion (44%) are active multimedia users, in Thailand 51 Million (74%) and in Switzerland 4.4 Million (52%). The 6 dominant platforms are:

1) Facebook, 2) YouTube 3) WhatsApp, 4) FB messenger, 5) Weixin/Wechat and 6) Instagram.

The in Thailand popular platform "line" ranks only 19. Interesting figures are as well

the number of mobile subscriptions in Thailand of 93.61 Million (135%) whereas in Switzerland only 10.75 Million (126%). A reason for this difference might be the coverage of PC owners in Switzerland. Our observation that mobiles are used much more than in Switzerland are shown with following figures: Active mobile social users in Thailand 46 million (67%) and in Switzerland 3.7 million (43%). We thank Regula for this highly interesting talk!



Again, we enjoyed delicious food at the Swiss Restaurant Chesa and thanks to Thomas Novak for sponsoring the dinner for Regula and handing over the token of appreciation

### November 24<sup>th</sup>: Raclette

The traditional raclette party took again place in the wonderful garden of the residence of the Swiss Ambassador **Ivo Sieber** and his wife **Gracita**. 150 participants joined this event and enjoyed the excellent food prepared by Bangkok Air Catering. We were served a cold platter containing a mix of cold meet imported from Switzerland with freshly baked bread. Then the smell of melted cheese covered the garden, telling us that the raclette buffet was open. As dessert we got Fresh Fruit Salad with Kirsch, Assorted Ice Cream and coffee sponsored by BonCafe.



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**BRASSERIE 9**  
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## December 9<sup>th</sup>: Christmas Brunch

The professional hosts Linus Knobel and Luca Sigg welcomed the 74 SSB members in the rustic Brasserie 9 already for the second time.

While the adults savoured the self-made egg liqueur for aperitif, the children enjoyed themselves in the playroom, supervised by the active care team of the RIS Swiss Section.

The rich and high standard buffet suited outstandingly to enjoy excellent food.

The much-awaited Santa Claus informed the 22 small kids and the 54 "big kids" that he was a modern Santa.

- Besides the traditional sources of information, he additionally works with internet and facebook
- Of course, he has a computer tablet, but he prefers to read from his golden book



Then everybody joined the singing of "Merry Christmas" in order to deserve the gifts from Santa Claus.



The Santa Claus got a nice surprise as well; he was offered to select himself a tasty bottle out of the very rich wine cellar of Brasserie 9. He decided for one of his favourites: a Spanish Rioja.

At this occasion we had the opportunity to make an exclusive interview with him.

- These days, the Santa Claus lives in Minburi. He originally comes from the «Heidiland» in the Swiss alps. In the past, he earned his living in Switzerland, in England, and in Thailand as chemist and as teacher.



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- Does he practice all the languages he knows in his civil life or as Santa? He speaks Swiss German and German, Thai, French and English.
- Thanks to his nearly vegetarian diet, sometimes adding a nice piece of meat and a glass of red wine, he is a top fit golf player - allegedly with handicap 36.
- As a wine lover he had to replace his wine cellar with 1,200 bottles from the past with beer in Thailand, due to the well-known reasons.
- His passion and hobby is travelling.
- In general, he is never shouting to kids (even sometimes suggested by parents). He prefers to praise them and to motivate, support and promote them. This might be the reason why he doesn't have in his equipment neither a big sack nor a "Rute".



### December 15<sup>th</sup>: Jass Tournament

For the third time already in 2018, Stefan Khun organized the SSB Jass tournament. This event attracted over 20 participants, among them 5 ladies. After the successful Jass afternoons which took place in the Rembrandt hotel, this time the competition was held for the first time in the Brasserie 9 where the host aimed at a high standard. And we are happy to report that Luca Sigg and his team, fulfilled the expectations greatly. After a cozy Jass afternoon the participants enjoyed an excellent, delicious dinner.

The winners of the competition were **1. Stefan, 2. Jakob (Jack), 3. Kurt**. First among the ladies was **Monika** who came from far away Phuket together with Herbert. **Lydia Rühli** joined the Jass tournament for the first time and was also awarded a prize.

Many thanks to the Gourmet House Brasserie 9 that sponsored the prizes. Gratitude goes to Luca and his team. „We like to come again“.

The next Jass event is planned to take place on 27 April, 2019.





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## December 18<sup>th</sup>: Get Together RIS Swiss Section

On the 18th December 2018, 20 SSB members and 2 guests joined the last Get Together event of the year in the Swiss restaurant Chesa. Knut Sierotzki, president of the RIS Swiss section, informed about the extension project of the Swiss School in Minburi, and Simon Dörig, the head of school, seconded in answering many of the numerous questions from the participants. The Swiss School in Minburi got too small with the increase of the numbers of



students, and it is planned to purchase additional land where a new building will be constructed as well as an airconditioned sports hall which can be used for big events as an auditorium.

Another highlight of the evening was the Fondue Chinoise with Australian Angus beef.

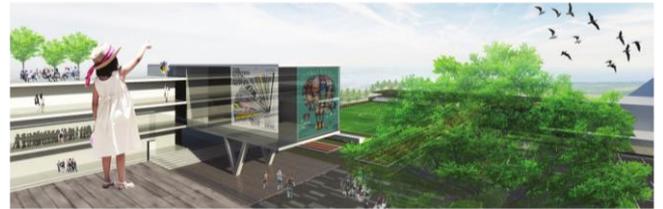
Many thanks to René and Thomas of Chesa restaurant who offered the dinner for the presenter, as well as to Linus Knobel for sponsoring the voucher for the speaker.

### School Extension Overview



### School Principles

- The new campus will facilitate the latest innovations in education and teaching methods
- The new campus will improve the learning experience of students and provide challenging learning environments



### School Principles

- The facilities will cope with the increasing demand for Swiss, German and Austrian education in Bangkok
- Implementing a sustainable long term perspective for the school



### School Principles

- It will consist of a state-of-the-art learning and activity complex with spacious, interactive and multifunctional learning areas, with a nursery, learning atelier/library, gym, science and music facilities



### Sponsoring is welcomed

- Long-term brand awareness & media exposure
- Connect the sponsors' brand with high quality education
- Increase business' reach and exposure
- Put the sponsors brand front and center





# Digitization of the SSB Archive



Archives are interesting worlds. To organize them is a time-consuming task. The archive of the Swiss Society Bangkok, SSB, was a sleeping giant, consisting of nearly 2m3 of boxes full of papers which had been stored at the home of our treasurer Thomas. By the

end of 2017 we decided to have a closer look at these boxes to search for the pearls and stories which were hiding in them. What began and is still ongoing is a long and

time consuming but also exciting task. You will find the most memorable findings on our website in the section *documents*. There you also find the 17 issues of the "Echo Archive" newsletter from 1996 to 2001 which was already scanned a few years ago.

The task of organizing our archive and digitizing the documents was managed by us, Werner Schaeppi and Andres Mikes. Thomas Gerber, kindly provided the many boxes and documents and enough space in his office for our work. First, we classified

the different files and folders and created a list with the content of each box according to the year. We found a total of 14 boxes. Some of them with content which did not belong to the SSB and other boxes contained merchandise such as caps and T-shirts.

We also found many photos and photo albums. Unfortunately, not all of them had a date. Our senior members might help us to classify them.

In addition to the existing documents Wilfried Schnider from the Embassy gave us the Log Book from the founding period of the Swiss Society Bangkok, with the documents from November 1931. He also gave us other documents such as AGM'S and Committee Meetings until October 1944.

We also found a second book with all the annual reports, meeting protocols, member lists and events from 1960 until 1968.

In a second step we decided which documents should be scanned such as AGM'S and committee meeting protocols, membership lists, reports about special activities etc. This is an ongoing process which will take some time, but we will inform you regularly about progress and interesting findings. In the next edition of the newsletter you can learn more about the foundation of the SSB, its goal to support Swiss people in need by granting loans to them and how they tried to recover the

money if the debtors could not repay them. Once the digitization project is finished, we will also have the pleasure to invite you to a *get together* to provide some detailed information, pictures and interesting stories.

Unfortunately, there are no files or documents available for the years 1945 to 1950. We would appreciate if members could provide us with information about this period.

Your registrars,

Andres Mikes  
Werner Schaeppi

