

Swiss IFYE treats Loganville 4-H to glimpse of home

BY JOYCE BUPP
Staff Correspondent

NEW FREEDOM — It's a long way from the mountains of Switzerland to the rolling hills of southern York County. But actually, the terrain is very reminiscent of his European home, says Yves-Etienne Kahn, American Field Service exchange student living with the William Thompson family.

Dubbed "Steve" by his host family and friends, the 18-year-old Swiss native is spending a year here attending Susquehannock High School as a member of the senior class. A veritable fountain of knowledge of his heritage and government, Steve recently shared bits of Swiss life and culture with the Loganville 4-H Community Club and is available for educational and civic club meetings.

When his exchange year ends in July, Steve will return to his hometown of Marges, located in the extreme western part of Switzerland, or the "French part," about 30 miles from Geneva. His parents own a carpet store in Marges, and the family also includes Steve's two sisters.

Marges is almost as old as the country of Switzerland, and the town was founded in 1296. Like all Swiss, Steve takes great pride in the cleanliness of the countryside, and the town's streets are cleaned daily. There is an abundant outdoor street market and gardens of colorful flowers. Grapes are a popular agriculture crop and are produced on the hillsides of the lake near Steve's home. From their town, the Kahn's can look across the lake at the spectacular scenery of the French Alps nearby.

Although the countryside is similar to that at home, there is one part of the Swiss climate that Steve has missed so far this winter, snow. Having learned to ski at a very young age, he's homesick for the snow-

covered peaks and is eager to try out the Pennsylvania ski resort hills which are small by comparison to those at home.

A second-year college student at home, Steve commutes daily by train to Lusanne, ten miles from his hometown of Marges. He's a journalism major, with a special interest in sports and plans to seek a job as a newspaper sportswriter following college graduation.

All students must attend school until age 16, with the option of them taking further schooling of three years in college or pursuing a vocational trade course. Most educational costs are paid by the government, with the average cost to students about \$200, which includes the price of books.

"Schools here are very different," Steve has observed. "I always have to run from class to class to get there on time." The pace in Switzerland is less hectic; and students have time to relax, but discipline is stricter and studies more difficult. Extracurricular and club activities are also less common in Swiss schools, with town activities filling that need. Each student is required to learn the local language, which might be either German, French or Italian, and two other foreign languages besides.

Founded in 1291, the nation of Switzerland was created when three states joined together for the common good. Today, a total of 23 states comprise the mountainous country. They are ruled by a body of seven men with collective powers equal to an American president. There are also two legislative bodies, one with 200 members and one with 46.

"Our country is small enough that we are all the same kind of people," explains Steve, noting that the relatively small number of citizens enable their

democratic type of government to be efficient and responsive to the public. All new government measures must be voted on by the populace, while unpopular laws can be balloted for change by submitting a petition carrying 50,000 signatures. A law change in 1971 gave Swiss women the right to vote for the first time.

In a comparison of Swiss and American culture and productivity, Steve cited statistics showing that his countrymen are the wealthiest in the world on a per capita basis, with an average income per person of \$13,833. Due to very high costs, though, there are less items like automobiles, and

(Turn to Page B3)



Yves-Etienne Kahn, known to his American friends as "Steve", shows Loganville 4-H'er Karrie Brenneman the part of Switzerland that is his home.

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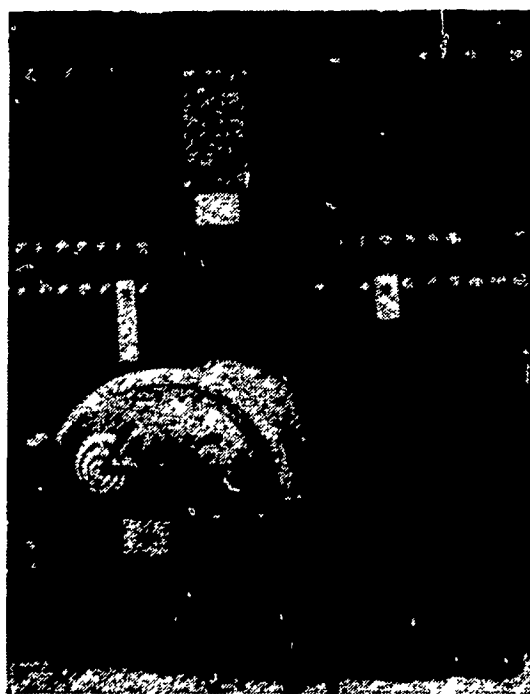
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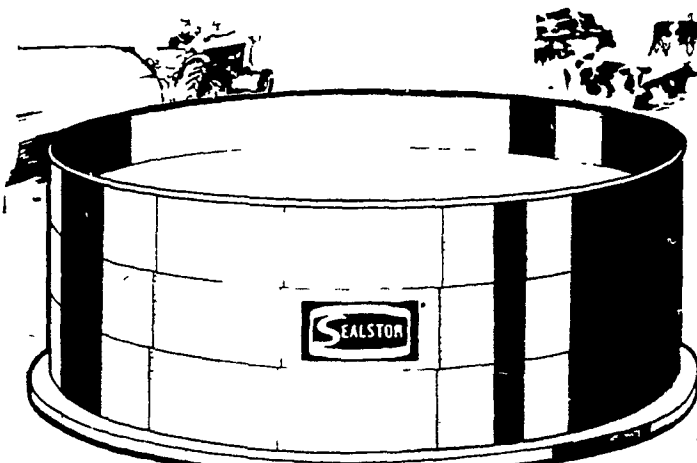
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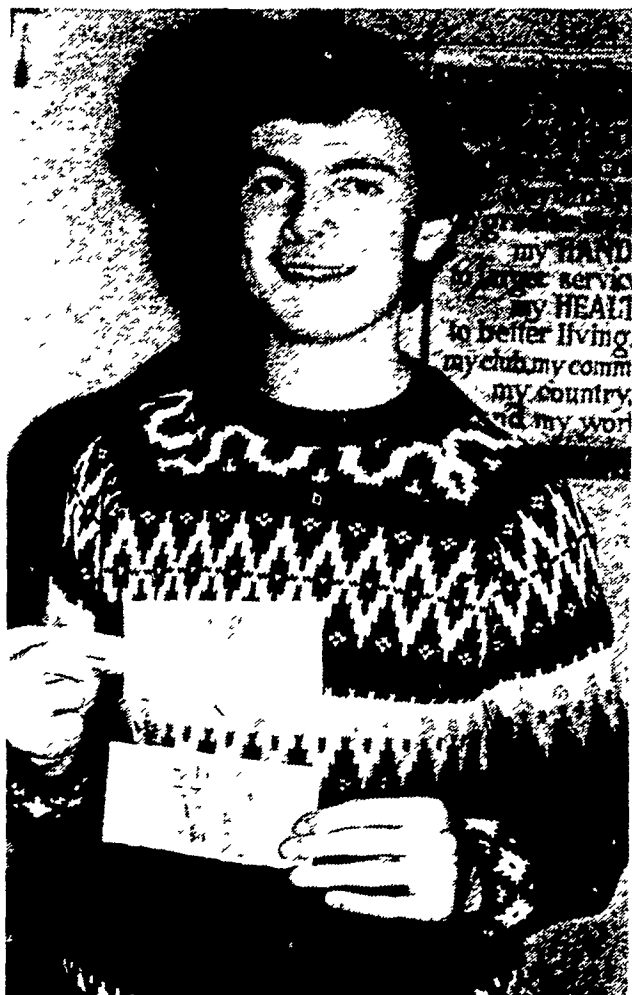
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