

A Leader From New Glarus

By Elmira Root-Grossenbacher

Paul Grossenbacher, an immigrant from Switzerland and resident of the New Glarus area for sixty one years, played a very active role in the 90th, 100th, 110th and 125th anniversary of New Glarus. His name has been mentioned in preparations for the 1995 New Glarus Sequicentennial festivities. Village President (Burgermeister) Hubert Elmer said, "If Paul were here, we could ask him." In a sense he'll be with us in spirit as his many contributions to New Glarus will still be visible and audible. That man, Paul Grossenbacher, is my father.

In 1904 Grossenbacher was born in Burgdorf, Canton Bern, Switzerland. After completing his school life in his hometown, he wanted to go to college to be a civil engineer. However, his dad wanted him to be a farmer. So Paul attended the College of Agriculture outside of Bern. After graduation he managed a large farm in France but didn't like living there. Grossenbacher then completed Business College in Bern. Since good jobs were not available, he took a position as an overseer in the Bernese State Prison Farm. This job wasn't what he wanted. In 1929 a friend coaxed him to go to the United States to seek employment. A severe economic depression made it difficult to find farm work. He was down to his last penny when he finally found employment on a farm in Brooklyn township northeast of New Glarus. A neighbor girl, Verena Elmer, would come to help the farmer's wife. She wanted to teach this young man how to speak English. This first contact with a Glarner developed into a lasting relationship. Verena was the daughter of Fred Elmer, born in Elm, Canton Glarus, and Elsbeth Elmer-Haemmerli from Engi. After Paul and Verena's marriage in 1931, they had two daughters, Elmira and Pauline, and two sons, John and Edward. In 1955 at the age of 14, Edward died from polio.

Paul had planned to stay in America for only two years. Now that he married Verena, New Glarus would become his home.

For several years my parents farmed on the Alvin Ott farm

southwest of New Glarus. Finally they moved to the edge of New Glarus where they bought a farm and dairy. Dad was the first person in New Glarus to pasteurize milk. I helped him deliver dairy products to customers throughout New Glarus. He would always take time to visit, so our route took longer than planned. In 1956, because of leg circulation problems, he sold the dairy and became an insurance agent until his retirement.

From the time that Paul came to the New Glarus area until his death in 1990, he was active in many aspects of community life.

Grossenbacher came from a singing family. He had a melodic, deep bass voice. Because of his love of singing with his mother and siblings, Paul was anxious to carry on traditions and utilize this talent in America. After hearing about the Mannerchor, he was happy when they asked him to join in 1929. They were the oldest male singing group of New Glarus, originating in 1912. By 1930 they already had thirty-three members. The Mannerchor held the first Volkfest (Swiss Independence Day Celebration) and Kilby Celebrations in New Glarus. The Mannerchor always held a "Familien Abend" concert and for some years had humorous Swiss plays in which I even had a small part. Paul took major roles and even directed these plays. Two of the plays were, *G'flausig Hochzeit* and *Der Gruempel Maerit*. After play practice, I always looked forward to Dad buying me an 'orange crush' drink which was once bottled by a New Glarus bottling company started by H.J. Zweifel.

The Mannerchor has often sung for festivals and other events. For several years they sang at the old church in the Swiss Historical Village. Paul was really proud to sing in this old log church.

An 'offshoot' of the Mannerchor was the New Glarus Yodel Club. It originated in 1928. After one of the members left in 1929, Dad was approached to take his place as a bass singer. Paul's first public appearance with the Yodelers was in 1930 on the famous Voegeli farm between New Glarus and Monticello at a meeting of the Brown Swiss Breeder's Association. Their

popularity grew and they participated at numerous events throughout Midwest U.S.A. Grossenbacher vividly recalled an invitation to the Swiss Club of Cleveland, Ohio. He related the following in his book of memories:

The railroad workers were on strike so we decided to fly. The solo yodeler was deathly afraid of flying. "Not with four horses will you get me on one of those flying machines!" said yodeler Hans Furrer. He finally consented and we arrived safely. When we came to the Mayflower Hotel, we all walked through the lobby dressed in our Swiss yodel jackets and milking caps. I overheard a man asking another, "Now what in the world do you think this is?" "Don't you know?" the other man said. "That is a group of rabbis." The railroad strike was over and the weather wasn't good for flying so to Hans Furrer's relief we took the train back to Chicago. When we arrived at the immense Union Railroad Station at 11 P.M., we walked in and the echo of our footsteps sounded back to us from all directions. "Boy," I said to Ruedi Burkhalter, "would the alphorns sound good in here!" Without a word, Ruedi took his alphorn out and started playing while the rest of us were ringing cowbells. In about two minutes we had one thousand people around us.

Paul became more involved with the Yodelers as he assumed several offices in the club and finally became the first official historian. He was instrumental in organizing two Yodeler concert tours to Switzerland in 1960 and 1964. The first tour group in 1960 was during the 650th anniversary of Glarus joining the Swiss Confederation. This was the first large New Glarus group ever to visit Glarus. Some of the Yodelers never returned to Switzerland so Grossenbacher fulfilled their dream of seeing the homeland. Concert tours were in Glarus and Burgdorf (Paul's hometown) as well as other places connected to the yodeler's heritage. People heard and enjoyed American and Swiss songs. One particular memory was when Grossenbacher sang, "Old Man River", a favorite song of the Mississippi.

It was "quite by accident" that the Edelweiss Stars originated in 1950. Vivian Blum, Monroe, invited New Glarus

Eastern Star members to sing a Swiss song for the Grand Chapter session of the Eastern Star in Milwaukee. After they successfully sang, "Jetzt wei mier eis joedele", the group decided to continue. In the beginning Paul was the only Swiss native. All were descendants of Switzerland. There were Glarner, Appenzellers, and my father, the Berner. He taught them many Swiss folk songs. They entertained at church gatherings, family celebrations, grand openings, conventions, parades, festivals and on television. The high point was participating in a Walt Disney film, "Adventures of Dairyland", created on a farm near Verona (North of New Glarus).

Paul really loved singing with this group. He felt they had a blend of Swiss and American style giving them a distinctive quality. He wanted them to see Switzerland so he organized concert tours in 1968 and 1971. A concert was held in Glarus. Paul's hometown, Burgdorf, was another concert setting. Again Grossenbacher helped many New Glarus and United States residents visit their ancestral country.

Grossenbacher served as emcee for these three singing groups for many years. He charmed the audiences at the "Alpine Festivals" on Wilhelm Tell weekend, Volkfest and other celebrations.

After singing with the Mannerchor and Yodelers for over fifty years and the Edelweiss Stars for more than thirty five years, Dad enjoyed just "sitting back and listening to these beautiful songs." In 1989 he wrote a one page essay on Singing. He said, "Singing gave me many pleasures. Now they tell me singing is healthy for you. Maybe that's the reason I'm a fairly healthy 85 year old."

"Wo mann singt, da lass dich ruhig nieder.
Böse Menschen haben keine Lieder".

His translation:

"Where they sing, stay and enjoy!
Mean people have no songs".

These singing groups paid tribute to Paul at his funeral October 18, 1990, in Swiss United Church of Christ, New Glarus.

The Mannerchor and Yodelers combined to sing their last songs to Paul, "Vaterunser" and "Blumen der Heimat."

Accompanied by an accordion the Edelweiss Stars sang "My God and I." It was a blustery, dark, dismal day, but as these groups were singing, the sun's rays hit the beautiful stained glass windows. It was as if Paul were saying, "Thank you."

I was privileged that my first trip to Switzerland was with the Edelweiss tours. In 1968 I really did not want to go to Switzerland, but my father said, "Your sister went with us on the 1964 'Yodler Tour' and your brother was there while he served as an officer in the U.S. army in Germany from 1963 to 1965." With Dad's knack of encouragement, I finally said "Yes". Dad was right. It was important for me to see my ancestral land, especially the Bern and Glarus region.

After my father stopped organizing tours, he asked if I'd like to carry on the tradition. "Since you are a teacher, your summers are free," he said. Beginning in 1972, I organized and escorted twenty-three consecutive annual tours. With the help of Martha Bernet, an Edelweiss singing member, future tour plans are underway. When my parents joined our tour group, Dad would help me. The Edelweiss Stars combined tours with our 'Friends of the Swiss' in 1985 and 1991. Grossenbacher's last tour and visit to his homeland was in 1985.

I really enjoy the legacy that Dad gave me of organizing and leading tours. Our tours always include the Glarus area. Interested tour participants visit the archives to trace their family history. As we tour Switzerland, Paul's songs, notes and jokes are shared and enjoyed. One of the jokes was about the rivalry between Canton Bern and Glarus.

A Berner (Berners are considered slow) and a Glarner had a race to see which one could fill a sack with snails first. The Glarner had his sack filled quickly. The Berner had none because the snails all got away from him.

Another idea for New Glarus was on the horizon in 1937. Edwin Barlow brainstormed the notion to have Schiller's *Wilhelm*

Tell portrayed in New Glarus. After seeing it at Interlaken, Barlow approached prominent New Glarus citizens. Grossenbacher was one of thirty-three residents invited to a meeting with Edwin Barlow to discuss the possibilities of performing this drama. Mr. Barlow asked Paul what he thought of materializing the *Wilhelm Tell* play. Dad was skeptical. He said, "I think it's too much for a small village."

During the first performance a rain storm didn't even interrupt the play. The audience wanted the cast to continue the performance. Grossenbacher was now convinced that New Glarus could captivate an audience with the *Wilhelm Tell* portrayal. The first Gessler was Paul. He said, "I was chosen for the role because I could ride a horse." He was uncomfortable with the role of Gessler, the Austrian tyrant. "I wanted to play a role where I could speak from the heart. The role went against the grain of what I felt." However, he portrayed Gessler well. My mother played Armgard, the poor woman who with her starving children, knelt at the foot of Gessler and his horse. She begged for mercy to free her husband from prison. Then Gessler threatened to ride over them. The children looked at the Austrian tyrant (their grandfather in real life) and said, "That can't be Grandpa. He is not that mean." At that very moment Tell shot Gessler, and he fell from the horse. One grandchild began to cry thinking Grandpa was really dead.

Dad influenced our entire family as well as community citizens to become part of the *Wilhelm Tell* pageant.

Grossenbacher was named honorary "Burgermeister" of New Glarus for Tell weekend in 1983 by Village President Marjorie Marty. This was for his many years of service to *Wilhelm Tell* and the community.

In 1987 Paul Grossenbacher was selected to serve as parade marshal for the 50th anniversary parade of *Wilhelm Tell*. This honor was based on his many years of dedication to this drama from its original planning in 1938, his role of Gessler for twenty-four years and for directing the German version for ten years. Paul and Verena led the parade proudly in an open

convertible.

Paul spoke about *Wilhelm Tell* to reporter Marty Rufener, *New Glarus Post*. "The Swiss language may disappear here but the traditions will not. The play will continue. We should be proud that we are still able to present the play in German. We have kept tradition going."

Paul was once called "the unchallenged goodwill ambassador between New Glarus and the Old World who died many times as Gessler."

Among Grossenbacher's many talents was painting. In 1942, I received a paint set for Christmas. Not artistically inclined, this little girl approached her daddy and said, "Please show me what you can do with these." He sketched and painted a Swiss country scene. We were both pleasantly surprised with the results. As a youngster my father had always dreamed of receiving a paint set. Now he was able to cultivate this talent. John Stewart Curry, an artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin, encouraged him to paint scenes of the New Glarus area. One day Paul checked his cattle at one of the pastures. The window on his truck framed a lovely scene. He returned to this setting several times. Pauline and I accompanied him when he put the finishing touches on the painting. We played in the forest nearby and would intermittently check on his progress. We liked what we saw.

Soon area residents viewed and enjoyed what he could do with pencils, paints and brushes. First, he used his artistic talents for family and friends. Then this talent became more visible throughout the New Glarus area. For the 100th anniversary of New Glarus, Paul designed a pillow cover. Arnold Wieser Sr. produced it at the Swiss Upright Embroidery factory in New Glarus. Paul did the paintings on the front of the Glarner Stube, backgrounds for the Mannerchor and a mural depicting a scene near Braunwald, Canton Glarus, on the north side of the Swiss Historical Village. Grossenbacher also painted a scene of the Matterhorn on the front of Flannery's Wilhelm Tell Club. He painted a welcome billboard; 'Don't Miss the Swiss' on Highway 69. A Wilhelm Tell welcome

sign was placed on the entry to the village of New Glarus. It was constructed by Abner Anderson and painted by Paul Grossenbacher. In 1955 he painted the canton shields for the 110th anniversary of New Glarus and the presentation of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*. These shields were placed on utility poles throughout the village.

Paul carved a wooden trough used outside a log cabin that had been moved from its original farm setting to the Swiss Historical Village. His skill with wood was also shown in a replica he made of the museum log church. It was used in a local business window to advertise the Swiss Historical Village. He also made many crossbows, an art he had learned in Switzerland.

An athletic young man, Paul was excited that the sport Swiss wrestling existed in Green County. Since he was a fairly good wrestler in Switzerland, he became involved here to make a little extra money. His first match was at Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin (Northwest of New Glarus). He won the match and earned thirty dollars. For several years he was champion. Paul said, "While I wrestled, I only lost one round and that was when my wife, Verena, finally had a chance to watch me." This match was against a strong and clever man named Marx Hoesly.

Hans Lenzlinger, another person interested in maintaining traditions in New Glarus, reactivated "Schwingfest" in the late 1970's. Hans knew of Grossenbacher's background and interest in wrestling. He and his committee asked Paul to be Fest President each time. He was proud to have this role but he sometimes wished he were younger so he could be on the mat.

My father taught Green County people and visitors to the Historical Museum another sport called Hornusse. He could speak again from personal experience. "A vertical scar in the center of his forehead happened during a Swiss Hornussen match." In the museum he demonstrated the playing equipment and explained the rudiments of the game. When the museum display lacked a bat, Paul made one to complete the set." His vision was to give a broad scope of the Swiss culture including sports.

Grossenbacher gained some notoriety from his ability as a

storyteller. When he was young, he would often sit on his mother's lap enjoying her stories. He told them over and over to young and old alike. As his experiences grew, new stories would emerge. He would speak to school classes about his immigration, careers, meaning of family crests and Switzerland in general. Museum visitors benefited from his tales as well. In May 1948 the New Glarus High School band, the Yodelers, the Wilhelm Tell usherettes and others participated in the State Centennial Celebration in Madison. The pageant depicted our state's history including the immigration of the Swiss. Paul told a story about an experience in this pageant. When he was ready to go on stage, he went to get a prop, a wine jug. But it was gone. Someone had taken it and enjoyed its contents. He had to go on without it.

Evidence of Paul's charisma in storytelling arose when he had the opportunity to work with professional storyteller, Mark Wagler, from Madison, Wisconsin.

Before the session at the New Glarus Grade School, Wagler met with 81 year old Grossenbacher for about two hours. Then with Grossenbacher, a superb storyteller, Wagler led the students through a quick course on how to solicit stories as well as how to listen for and to them. Grossenbacher with his expressive gesturing and Schwyzerdeutsch syncopation were prime examples of those. The class, seated in a circle, was spellbound as Grossenbacher wove yarns of rabbit catching and deer hunting in Switzerland, of adventures in sibling rivalry, of growing up in Switzerland and coming to America.

It didn't matter whether Paul was acting as an emcee, guiding tours or just visiting with people. He always had a story to help give a more colorful and vivid perspective to the situation.

Dad's letters and essays were enjoyable to read. His expressive and tender words carried into his productive New Glarus life. After taking on the responsibility as historian for the Yodel club, Paul decided to write an autobiography. For many years he was a member of the Swiss American Historical Society.

They published this fascinating story beginning with his life in Switzerland up to 1989. It was titled, "Looking Back: From Burgdorf, Canton Bern to New Glarus Wisconsin."

Shortly before his death, Grossenbacher wrote unpublished essays on *My Birthplace*, *The Swiss Army*, *Singing*, *Faith*, *About Women In My Life*, and *What the Church Means to Me*.

His last writing was a letter to me while I was on tour in Switzerland in July, 1990. He wrote:

I wish I could be with you but I am anxiously awaiting your safe return so you can tell me all about visiting Switzerland; especially Glarus, Burgdorf and our relatives. You will find a good listener in me when you return.

Love,
Dad

Because of Paul's knowledge of the German language and the old German script, he was often approached to translate letters and documents. This served a dual purpose. Families discovered their ancestral roots, and Grossenbacher accumulated a broader scope of knowledge on family histories, which he could share.

A history of the Voegeli family was compiled by Viola Reichart, a descendant. Paul Grossenbacher's obituary appeared in this book.

I include this page in the Voegeli Book because Mr. Grossenbacher translated the material that I received in German into English for me. The second reason is the obituary tells how he and others worked to preserve the Swiss heritage in Green County, Wisconsin for us. The Voegelis should appreciate the excellent work that has been done.

From her *Genealogy of the Elmer Families*, Alice Zweifel, said, "I relied on the personal knowledge of these persons who know various dialects of the language from having lived in Switzerland or from having spoken their languages with their parents. Paul Grossenbacher was one of these." Dad had a special interest in translating documents and letters related to

the Elmer history since he married Verena Elmer.

In 1970 the partnership between New and Old Glarus was strengthened for the 125th anniversary of New Glarus and the grand opening of the Hall of History at the Swiss Historical Village. This required much correspondence with Glarus. At that time Paul was the only Board Director for the Swiss Historical Village that could read and write the German language. Thus, he was elected president of the Swiss Historical Village.

When the Glarus Yodel Club visited New Glarus in 1979, an article written by Marion C. Streiff and translated by Grossenbacher appeared in the *New Glarus Post*. Old and New Glarus benefited from this historical event. Through translation Grossenbacher felt that New Glarner as well as all Swiss-Americans could become more aware of their roots. He hoped they would continue to find ways to maintain these links.

Paul's first visit to Glarus was a result of a promise to his wife, Verena. He would take her to Switzerland for their 25th wedding anniversary. This would be Verena's first time and Grossenbacher's second return. Naturally, Mother wanted to trace her roots and visit relatives in her parents' birthplaces, Elm and Engi. Their base was Hotel Glarnerhof, Glarus, owned by Trudi and Fridolin Vogel. One night the Vogels told them not to order dinner. The Glarus City Board of Directors would have them as their guests. This was because Paul was on the Village Board of New Glarus. Wives of the directors were present and chatted with Mrs. Grossenbacher. One of the ladies said, "Verena speaks like my grandmother did." The old dialects were disappearing in Switzerland, but the Swiss Americans still had them. Paul and Verena had a most enjoyable evening. "We started eating at 7 P.M. and at midnight we were still sitting at the table."

While in Glarus, Paul wanted the people to see how Americans farmed. Before his trip, Grossenbacher took pictures of every modern farm machine. He made sure that he understood the machines and operations of these machines well enough to answer questions. At Glarus he began showing the slides at 8 P.M. It was 4 A.M. before everyone went to bed. These events opened the

doors for friendships between the Grossenbachers and Glarus residents. This paved the way for many future friendships for residents of Old and New Glarus.

Paul had a deep interest in the Swiss Historical Village. During the original planning in 1940, Grossenbacher became a member of the New Glarus Historical Organization. In 1956 he became a member of the Board of Directors for the Swiss Historical Village.

In 1968 Grossenbacher gave a speech at the Swiss American Historical Society luncheon in Embassy Hall, Washington, D.C. Secretary Dr. Lukas Burckhardt wrote:

The highlight of the luncheon was the speech by our member, Paul Grossenbacher from New Glarus. Born and grown up in the Canton of Bern, Switzerland, but now settled in New Glarus for decades, he is a leading personality in all its community enterprises from the singing and yodeling choir to the annual open air *Wilhelm Tell* play and now to the Hall of History projects. He is in the very center of all endeavors to foster relations between New Glarus and Switzerland. His warm and humorous remarks on life in New Glarus and on the development of a home grown flourishing tourist industry entertained and pleased the audience.

For the planning and building of the Hall of History in the Swiss Historical Museum, Paul communicated often with architect Jakob Zweifel from Switzerland. Grossenbacher's biggest challenge in 1970 was preparing for the 125th anniversary of New Glarus with the dedication of the Hall of History. Grossenbacher was also Chairman of the 125th Anniversary Committee. (Appendix 1) Many special guests and dignitaries were invited from Switzerland and America. Grossenbacher encouraged Glarner and other Swiss to visit here and he was so pleased when they did. He said, "Es ich glich wyt vo New Glarus uf Glarus, wi vo Glarus uf New Glarus" (It's the same distance from New Glarus to Glarus as it is from Glarus to New Glarus"). (Appendix 1)

About three hundred people came from Switzerland. There was a Jubilaum concert entitled "Melodies of Friendship" with Swiss

and American entertainment. There was a parade, an official reception and a dedication. Grossenbacher was in a whirlwind of activities. He rode on several floats in the parade, was master of ceremonies at the Jubiläum concert and sang with the Yodelers, Mannerchor and Edelweiss Stars. Paul served as an official for the dignitaries and the dedication of the Hall of History in the Swiss Historical Village. At this dedication Dr. Fritz Stucki, the governor of Glarus, remarked:

We of Old Glarus are proud of the efforts of our forefathers which can be seen here today. We are glad that the people in New Glarus have continued to keep strong contact with their homeland. And I hope that during the next 125 years these same strong ties will remain.

An official representative for the President of Switzerland, Dr. Felix Weber, also praised the community. Charles Mueller spoke in behalf of the Swiss Embassy, Washington, D.C., and said, "The traditions and friendship of Old Glarus and New Glarus can be seen here today with the dedication of the Hall of History which proudly displays the traditions of both." Wisconsin Governor Knowles also complimented New Glarus for their traditions.

Paul was always striving for ways to improve the Historical Village. He proposed adding buildings, exhibits and landscaping. He wanted to beautify the grounds with lovely gardens and more paintings.

When a new exhibit came from Switzerland for the Hall of History, Paul assisted in setting up the display. In 1982 he worked with Carl Baer from Glarus.

For many years Grossenbacher was in charge of greeting special guests and dignitaries. He was considered the "unofficial goodwill ambassador between New Glarus and his homeland." Paul was also called "Mr. New Glarus" when Kerwin Steffen interviewed Paul in 1975 on radio station WEKZ.

Grossenbacher was the official greeter and in charge of events when Felix Schnyder, Switzerland's Ambassador to the United States, and Alexander Manz, Consulate General of

Switzerland, with their wives were honored at New Glarus in 1972.

In 1975, Paul had a ride on an airplane piloted by Christian Streiff from Glarus. They flew over Glarnerland and landed on the glacier behind the Toedi. Grossenbacher treasured this exciting experience. Later, Christian Streiff presented New Glarus with tons of rocks from Glarnerland to be displayed at the Swiss Historical Village.

Dad was delighted when the Glarus Yodel Club visited New Glarus in 1979. For the Swiss Historical Village, the Glarus Yodelers presented Grossenbacher with a "cluster of crystal stones from the Sardona Region in Elm."

Paul was President of the New Glarus Historical Village for twelve years and a guide from 1970 until illness prevented this in July, 1989. After recuperating somewhat, he hoped to guide again for the 1990 season. It never happened. However, he was on the Board of Directors until his death. Grossenbacher dedicated fifty years to the Swiss Historical Village.

Between guiding tours he would often sit outside and relax on a bench. Frequently he said, "What this place needs is a Linden tree." After he died, memorials from friends and family were used to place a Linden tree with a bench underneath it in his memory at the Historical Village.

When Grossenbacher found time, he liked to fish and hunt. He was an avid reader; especially American and Old World history. His greatest treasures were his family, friends and community. Even though his homeland was Switzerland, he was a devoted American citizen. With him, my sister and I always picked wild flowers before Memorial Day (a day to honor our veterans who dedicated their lives and/or time for our country). We would go to the lovely, green woods on the hilly slopes of our farm. He loved nature and made us more aware of the sights and sounds of the forest. We picked violets, wild roses and honeysuckles. From him we acquired a respect for the beauty of nature. Dad convinced us that the protected lady-slipper flower should not be touched. With our lovely bouquets we would march in a parade through New Glarus to a Memorial Day program. Finally we went to the cemetery where we would place our flowers by a cross

representing locally deceased soldiers. Memorial Day honored all veterans, living and dead. Many of these had descended from Canton Glarus. Some Glarner names included Duerst, Stuessy, Stauffacher, Streiff, Marty, Klassy, Hoesly, Hefty and Zweifel.

Grossenbacher had a keen interest in all facets of community life. Paul "was one of the leaders who convinced the New Glarus community to take advantage of its Swiss heritage, a decision that has turned the village into a major southern Wisconsin tourist attraction," said editor David Zweifel from the *Capital Times*. He was also a member of the New Glarus School Board, the New Glarus Village Board, the Lion's Club, Masonic Lodge, Order of the Eastern Star, Zor Shrine, Swiss Church Consistory, Alpine Club and Chairman of the March of Dimes (Polio Foundation). His love of the New Glarus community and his family led him to even play Santa Claus at one of our country school Christmas programs. One time I recognized his walk and shoes and I blurted out, "That's not Santa Claus! That's my father." A generation later my daughter went to see Santa Claus at the New Glarus theater. When she returned to Grandpa and Grandma's house with her sack filled with fruit, candy and nuts, her uncle John said, "Did you see Santa Claus?" In her two and a half year old dialogue, she answered, "I saw Santa Claus and Grandpa, too." Paul was always willing to help out the school and community, even in some small way, but it's certain that he didn't disguise himself well as Santa Claus. Christmas and all holidays were times to share Swiss and American traditions with community and family. Our family as well as most others in New Glarus enjoyed Berner bratzeli, Glarner bierebrot and traditional German songs at Christmas.

Many descriptions have been written about Grossenbacher. This was written by Helen Zimmerli in the *Monroe Evening Times*.

Stalwart, steadfast-with a genuine regard for his community and fellow man. That is Paul Grossenbacher, a man of the Old World but in tune with the New; proud of his Swiss heritage. He is a leader in New Glarus but as a guide in the background until his help is needed. Paul Grossenbacher is a remarkable tie of the Old to the New World; a person of many hats and he wears them well.

Paul always said "We reap what we sow". The New Glarus Jaycees (Junior Chamber of Commerce) presented the Outstanding Distinguished Citizen Award for his long participation in the Wilhelm Tell drama and for his contributions and activities in the 125th anniversary celebration, the Swiss Church, New Glarus Historical Society, the festivals, singing groups and other activities. When Grossenbacher received this award in 1970, Federal Congressman Robert Kastenmaier, sent him a letter of congratulations. He said, "I can see that you made a great contribution to your community and are certainly worthy of this award."

Paul's hometown remembered him. The Burgdorf S ngerbund came to New Glarus for the 1980 Volkfest weekend. Grossenbacher was honored at Burgdorf in 1984 and 1985 for his role in binding ties with New Glarus and Switzerland.

Time was passing quickly for Paul. In 1989, Grossenbacher wrote this in his published book of memories:

And now, like the sun sets in the west so
do our lives go down behind the horizon.
But I am glad. I have been looking back
because what I can see makes me very proud
and happy.

Ich hab'mein Sach getan
Doch allerwegen
An Gottes Segen war alles gelegen.

I have done my job,
But in every way,
All came from God's blessing.

Paul was in the hospital on his death bed on Wilhelm Tell weekend, 1990. His spirits were low. Then he had some visitors. One was Howard Christensen who played Wilhelm Tell. Christensen came just before his performance dressed in his Tell costume and with him he had the crossbow that Paul had made. Weak Grossenbacher clutched the crossbow while Christensen told him how he appreciated what Paul had done for Wilhelm Tell and the New Glarus community. Fridolin and Trudy Vogel surprised him with their visit. When Dad saw them, the volume of his voice increased to a yell. He was so happy to see some of his Glarner

friends. These visits lifted my father's spirits like a healing injection, but not for long. Paul knew he could no longer be a part of the life in New Glarus and Switzerland that was once so much a part of him.

On October 15, 1990 Paul left us.

A former New Glarus Post Editor, Bill Capallaro, paid tribute to Grossenbacher with this *Eulogy*.

So Paul Grossenbacher is gone. Another old timer passes on. And life moves ahead in New Glarus.

However, Grossenbacher wasn't just any old timer. He was a genuine New Glarus treasure, a treasure more precious than gold, silver or any material thing you can imagine.

We have museums in New Glarus to preserve the heritage of the Swiss immigrants. We have festivals to celebrate the Swissness of this unique village and share it with people from all over the country, even the world. And until now, we had Paul Grossenbacher to help us do it.

When I came to New Glarus almost 20 years ago to begin a long stint as publisher and editor of the *Post*, Paul was one of my first contacts. People told me, you have to talk to Paul Grossenbacher if you want to learn about New Glarus, its heritage and its history.

I did meet him shortly afterwards. If I remember right, he gave me my first tour through the Historical Village. Through the years, he was a continuing source of education for me, and of amusement with his never ending array of stories of his adventurous early life, and most of all, I treasured his friendship. He was a great gentlemen of the old world, who easily made the transition to the new, and would have been a genuine treasure in any world.

New Glarus has been blessed with his presence for more than half a century, and while certainly you can say that nobody is irreplaceable, we all know that men like Grossenbacher don't come around very often.

When I left New Glarus two years ago for a brief sojourn in California, I made a point of saying goodbye to Paul, who was beginning to slow down even then. Paul told me that I should "go for it", that life was supposed to be an adventure, or words to that effect. Now I am back home, and Paul has left for his new adventure in another new world. I'm sure he'll have some good stories to tell. May God bless him.

After Paul's death, 'The Friends of the Swiss-Edelweiss Stars' 1991 tour was at Elm. Hans Ryhner, an energetic leader for Old and New Glarus, presented Verena Grossenbacher with an enlarged colored photo of Grossenbacher guiding tours at the schoolhouse in the Swiss Historical Village. This photograph was taken when Ryhner and a group of lawyers visited the New Glarus Museum. They appreciated the tour Paul had given them as well as his devoted work between Old and New Glarus.

When Paul was Gessler, he rode his horse, Major, a beautiful Tennessee Walker, for several years. As Major was aging, his gray mane had to be colored for the *Wilhelm Tell* performance. Grossenbacher said, "We've grown old together and someday we'll both be gone. It is up to us to see that there is somebody left to carry on." Paul has done this and Green County and New Glarus traditions, with newly inspired leaders, will continue. Grossenbacher has left an indelible mark and his influence is not forgotten. Traditions will carry on.

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Appendix I

Welcome to New Glarus

It is with great pleasure that we welcome all visitors to the 125th anniversary of New Glarus, the Little Switzerland of America, and to the dedication of the Hall of History.

It was during the 650th anniversary year of Glarus joining the Swiss Confederation that the first group of people from New Glarus visited the homeland of their forefathers. New Glarus Yodel Club tours took more of our people to Switzerland in 1960 and again in 1964. In 1968, the Edelweiss Stars hosted a tour of 215 people to Switzerland, most of whom were direct descendants of immigrants from Glarus and other cantons.

Since then, many other groups from our village have visited Switzerland. All enjoyed the beautiful countryside of the Fatherland so much that they want to go back again and again.

This is the first time the people from Switzerland visit us as a group, and we sincerely hope they enjoy their stay here as much as the people of New Glarus have enjoyed visits to their country.

As I once told some friends in Switzerland, "Es isch glich wyt vo New Glarus uf Glarus, wi vo Glarus uf New Glarus" ("It's the same distance from New Glarus to Glarus as it is from Glarus to New Glarus"). Thank you for coming that distance; we hope you come again soon.

To all of our visitors, Swiss and American, we hope your stay here is an enjoyable one and may you take home many pleasant memories from New Glarus.

PAUL GROSSENBACHER
President, New Glarus Historical Society
Chairman, Anniversary Committee