

A Swiss Mountain

BY JANET WILLIAMS

HANDSOME FRITZ FREY, his black hair shot with silver, lounged at the flower-banked, heated pool on the grounds of his Burgenstock Hotel Estate—the Palace, the Grand and the Park—high up in the Swiss Alps. In a moment of relaxation, he was sipping a drink.

Within sight was rose-colored, snow-crested Mt. Jungfrau (The Maiden) offering a challenge from her 12,500-foot crown to the swimmers, strollers, and cocktail drinkers. Below the terrace, white sails dotted the deep blue waters of Lake Lucerne. Just a rifle shot away is the holy spot called Rutli, where Swiss Independence was born in 1291, and not far away the forest where the legendary William Tell shot the apple from his son's head.

Frey sighed and turning to his guest said, "This is the political and geographical center of Switzerland."

"You are internationally known as an electrical engineer," the guest said. "How did you ever get into the hotel business?"

Frey smiled.

"It's a long story," he answered, "but first let me say that being a

good hotelman does not necessarily mean being a good engineer. But an engineer who converts into a hotelman has many advantages on his side, as I will show you."

The beautiful hotels, with iron grill balconies, clinging vines and Old World charm; the superb scenery with sky, lake, earth and mountains changing color minute by minute with nature's own kaleidoscope; the lush gardens with flowers in wanton red, blue, pink, green, white and yellow; the invigorating air—well, it's trite to write it, but here goes: Burgenstock belies description.

Eighty years ago the Burgenstock region, then consisting of mountain pastures, goat paths and forests, was devoid of roads.

Today the Burgenstock enterprise embraces three hotels and a private club accommodating more than 500 guests; six miles of roads and paths leading through fragrant pine forests and across green mountain meadows; a sporty 2,450-yard golf course, three tennis courts and a private beach with crystal-clear water; an underwater bar where one can drink

a drink and see what the royal families of Europe and Hollywood look like while submerged; the amazing funicular (cable railroad) and the Hammetschwad Lift, the highest and quickest open passenger elevator in Europe (moving, in 60 seconds, 553 feet from the Cliff Walk to the Mountain House); and a boat service on Lake Lucerne. It all adds up to the largest private hotel enterprise in Switzerland.

THE STORY of the Burgenstock dates back to 1870," said Frey. "A Swiss parquet floor manufacturer named Joseph Bucher-Durrer was looking for new ways to promote his business. He concentrated on hotels to better display his products. Soon the hotel side of this project grew to such proportions and so amazed him that he decided to go into the hotel business.

"In a few short years, he became one of Switzerland's foremost hotel pioneers and built not only numerous hotels in our own country, but also the Hotel Quirinal in Rome, the Palace in Milano and the Semiramis in Egypt."

It was in 1870 that Bucher-Durrer inspected (and purchased most of) the beautiful Burgenstock Peninsula. He first built a road from the valley and a funicular from the lake up to Mt. Burgenstock and, between 1872 and 1888, built his three hotels atop a plateau, 3,000 feet above sea level and 1,500 feet above Lake Lucerne. It was a prosperous ven-

ture, until the outbreak of World War I. Tourists disappeared. Bucher-Durrer had died and his heirs lacked interest in managing the resort. The hotels were closed.

"In 1925," said Frey, "there was a report that a Czech magnate intended to buy the Burgenstock Estate. This rumor upset my father. Sure, he was an engineer who had never had anything to do with the hotel business. But he was a loyal Swiss and he revolted against the idea that a few miles from William Tell's land, where the Swiss Federation had its beginning in 1291, one of the finest places in all Switzerland was to go into foreign hands. He made up his mind and bought the whole place. That was the moment when the Frey family and the Burgenstock Estate became one."

Frey likes to talk about his father, Friedrich Frey-Furst, who died two years ago, naming his son sole heir to the vast enterprise.

"My father was a hard worker," Frey said. "He worked all his life. First, to pay for his studies and become an electrical engineer; then to open and operate his own plants, which, step by step, he established. Finally, he worked just because he liked working. The impetus of his life were his work and his family. He founded and operated the Electrical Works in Reichenbach, and Electro-Chemical Plant in Meiringen, and the leading Swiss electrical firm, Frey, Ltd., Lucerne, which, in addition to my hotel activities, I now direct."

In 1925, when Frey-Furst's patriotism brought to the family the Grand, Palace and Park Hotels, Burgenstock, a cable railroad and an outdoor lift, people wondered what would happen. How can an electrical engineer without any hotel experience make a go of a completely run-down resort? Most people shrugged and those who felt it their duty to comment on his fool's venture were cut short by Frey-Furst's laconic comment: "I'll show you." And he did.

FREY-FURST's theory of running a resort was very simple: What else should a hotel be but a home? He frankly admitted he knew nothing about managing a hotel, but he did know all about an ideal home. So he set himself to work and proved his theory was right.

The first task was to modernize the interior of the hotels, by putting in bathrooms, enlarging the public rooms and adding all those extra facilities one expects to find in a modern home. Modernizing was done with the sole purpose of creating an atmosphere which was both luxurious and home-like. Rooms, suites, public rooms, bars were furnished with Oriental rugs, antique furniture, paintings and tapestries.

"My father's cherished hobby was the collection of originals by the old masters," said Frey. "Long before he purchased the hotels he had a wonderful collection and since he was determined to convert his hotels

into the finest of homes, he did not hesitate a moment to decorate them with his collection, which would be the pride of any museum. In the public rooms are priceless paintings by Rubens, Van Dyck, Tintoretto, Correggio, and many others. Connoisseurs are particularly interested in the Gobelin Tapestries. And I must mention the charming little chapel with its Gothic Madonna and other ancient wood sculptures."

Beside the business of modernizing, other great tasks were ahead when the Freys took over. Roads were built to connect the resort with the valley. Paths were hewed through the rocks. Garages were built on terraced concrete constructions — and rebuilt again and again to handle the steadily increasing motor traffic. An electrical works was constructed to provide electricity, and to pump water 1,500 feet up the mountain. Greenhouses were built and all sporting facilities had to be carved out of solid rock.

The tennis courts were blasted out of forest and rock ledges.

"But the construction of our golf course was the toughest job of all," laughed Frey. "With the aid of tons of dynamite, we blew up 2,500 yards of forest and rock. All the soil had to be brought up from the very bottom of the valley over a winding road. As Father was a passionate golfer, this was a work of love. Our course today is one of the sportiest and most scenic — I believe — in all the world."

FREY had a long-cherished plan for a swimming pool. Like the tennis courts, and the golf course, it was difficult to plan, because the spot indicated was actually a forest. More than a thousand trees were cut down and some 5,000 tons of rock blown up and carted away to make room for a beautiful, heated swimming pool, a submarine bar, garden areas, and terraces for sunbathing and dancing.

"I told you that being a good hotelman does not necessarily mean being a good engineer, and vice versa. There are many advantages in not being a hotelman when taking over a hotel. Here is what I mean.

"First of all, the financial security. If you own a business apart from the hotel you are going to manage, and if such business is prosperous, you run no risk — whatever might happen to your hotel. The financial background allows you to operate on a large scale.

"Second, not trained in and not bound by any hotel tradition, you have a more personal view on food, service, accommodation, entertainment and everything else. The success of any first-class hotel where guests stay for extended periods is based on personal attention and individual care. Here your personal initiative comes in wonderfully.

"Third, if you are an engineer and happen to find yourself suddenly the owner of a hotel estate like the Burgenstock, high above Lake Lucerne with vast grounds of cliffs, rocks, and woods, you are downright fascinated by the engineering fields which open before you. A mountain hotel is not to be compared with a city hotel, where all necessary facilities are brought right to your door. It is so much more work, and so much more interesting.

"More than a quarter of a century of work and investments connect the Freys with the Burgenstock estate. What originally was a hobby of my father became the task of life to me. Engineer though I am, I am now, first, a passionate hotelman."

Frey was standing now. One could almost see the rose colors of the frosty Maiden reflected in his eyes.

"I forgot to tell you my very best story," he said. "When Hitler was in his heyday, my father was informed that Hitler had built the fastest lift in all Europe. My father was furious. He called in all the electrical engineers, and told them what he had heard.

" 'Hitler, bah!' he exclaimed. 'I will not have it. Speed up our lift

"Within a matter of days the lift became the fastest in all Europe — and is today."





WE NEED A ✓ FOREIGN LEGION

By George Fielding Eliot

OUR MILITARY establishment is incomplete because it is not capable of meeting every type of emergency with which the American government and people may have to deal.

Specifically, it is not capable of coping with the small-war racket — the constant nibbling of the Communist rodents at the fringes of the free world, particularly in Asia.

We can fight a big war if we have to, and today we could probably win it — at a price. But we are not willing to pay that price, in our own blood and in untold damage to our homes and workshops and all that makes up the American way of life, over every miserable incident that may be thrust upon us by the eternal Communist pressures along the vast frontiers of the Red empire.

Yet we cannot stand idly by while

the free nations who are unlucky enough to live along those frontiers are nibbled to death, either. If we do, the Communists will continue to make piecemeal gains — such as they have just made in Northern Vietnam. In the end, we'll have to make a stand somewhere — fighting a big war after the Reds have swallowed up vast resources in manpower, food and raw material sources, and after free peoples everywhere have lost confidence in our willingness to take risks to help them.

The threat of massive retaliation — that is, of the direct use of our air-atomic-hydrogen power against hostile centers of industry and population — is our great deterrent, our Big Stick. But it deters only when the other fellow has good reason to think it will be used. Thus the frontiers of the free world in Western