



LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

THE WATCH MAGAZINE REDEFINED

08:2010 WATCHJOURNAL.COM



OUR MAN IN SWITZERLAND

THE SWISS WAY

SWITZERLAND IS HOME TO THE WATCH INDUSTRY FOR GOOD REASON

I've been living in Switzerland for about three years, covering the watch industry for *Watch Journal* from my office just outside Yverdon-les-Bains, perfectly situated equidistant from the Watch Valley, Geneva, Bienne and Basel. If there's one thing I've come to understand, it's that the Swiss character is perfectly suited to watchmaking.

First and foremost, the Swiss are concerned with doing things the right way. The honor system is alive and well here in Switzerland. The Swiss don't have tolls on the highways; they trust everyone to buy a yearly pass. And everyone does. On trams and buses, riders are expected to buy tickets despite the fact that there are few or no checks. So, who better to manage timekeeping, which has to be precise and where no corners can be cut, than the Swiss?

In addition, the Swiss pay great attention to detail, another attribute needed in watchmaking. Those postcard pictures of spotless Swiss villages with colorful flowers in every window box—true to life. The woman who lives across the street from me spends several mornings a week sweeping the streets just so that the village looks nice.

Also, the Swiss are very measured, taking a long-term view of things. Many Swiss watch companies have centuries of history and have survived many a crisis. That's why there was little panic here during the recession. Things aren't done quickly in Switzerland, which can frustrate an American living here, but they are done right.

And, finally, the Swiss understand balance in life and work. People here work hard and value their time off. On Sundays, businesses close so that nothing distracts from family and relaxation, not even a trip to the supermarket. And the watch companies all shut down for a month in the summer, so that employees can recharge for another year of focused hard work. This approach keeps everyone clear-headed and able to perform at an extremely high level.

Thank goodness for the Swiss.

—Keith W. Strandberg

INTERNATIONAL EDITOR



CREDIT CALVINISM

When I first started writing about watches, I researched how Switzerland had become the center of watchmaking. Interestingly, two things came together—the Reformation and Switzerland's long, cold winters—to make this country the watchmaking epicenter that it is. Calvin's Reformation banned the wearing of jewelry, but not timepieces, so Geneva's master jewelers turned to watchmaking. Because snow covers the fields of the Jura Valley for five months, the farmers had little to do during the winter, so the manufacturing of watch parts and ultimately movements and finished watches took hold.