

Auto Bonne

SWISS KIWANIAN IS PASSIONATE ABOUT CLASSIC CARS AND GAS PUMPS.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KASEY JACKSON

Martin Jaggi sits in his office inside the Energy Park Event Museum in Laupersdorf, Switzerland, with a smile on his face. Someone just mentioned the gorgeous view he has outside of his window—a sweeping stretch of grass, perfectly groomed, all but disappears as it slowly draws itself upward toward the Jura Mountains,

located north of the Western Alps. Needless to say: it's very green. All of this is set against the no-cloud-to-be-seen blue sky.

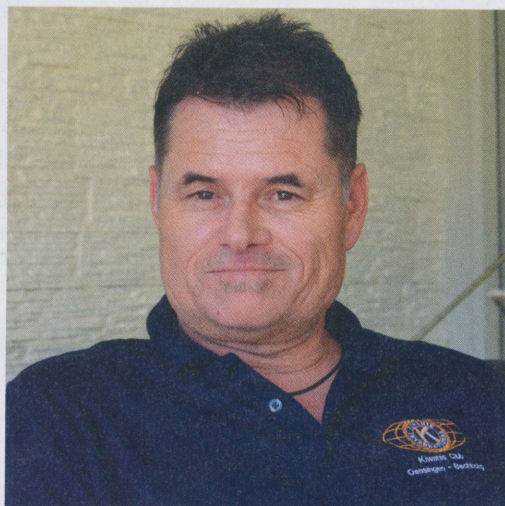
"It's quite perfect," Jaggi says.

But visitors to the Energy Park Event Museum aren't only coming to Laupersdorf for the scenery outside. They're interested in what sits inside this building, on the floors below Jaggi's office.

"I collect gas pumps," he says. "I have a lot. Cars, too."

That's quite an understatement, immediately obvious upon entering the two-floor showroom that takes up most of the massive building's space. The building is Jaggi's home base for his multiple

Martin Jaggi is a member of the Kiwanis Club of Oensingen-Bechburg.



businesses—the car museum, event planning and advertising. All these professions come in handy when Kiwanians in nearby Zofingen need help planning their annual jazz festival (see “All That Jazz,” September 2017). Jaggi helps with logistics for the bands and handles advertising and promotion for the event. But if you’re here, in this space owned and operated by Jaggi, you’re likely here for the car stuff.

So how and where did he get all of it?

“At 15 years old, I started collecting gas pumps because nobody else was interested in gas pumps,” he says with a laugh. “I saw a pump from the United States, which was art deco, and it was so fantastic. So, I started to collect them.”

According to Jaggi, not many people in Europe were or are collecting gas pumps. And not many people have a collection that could rival his.

“I have more than 600 gas pumps,” he says. “I think it’s one of the largest collections in the world. I have gas pumps from every decade. There are some people who only collect from the 30s, 40s, or 50s, but I collect from every decade.”

For about eight years, Jaggi owned a smaller museum in a nearby village, but it didn’t take long for his collection to outgrow that space.

“I received a collection of 150 gas pumps from a collector,” he says. “He was over 80 years old when he gave me his whole collection for free because nobody else was interested in gas pumps.”

Over the years, people have given Jaggi many free gas pumps. And free cars. People want others to enjoy their collections, he says, so they ask if they can donate to Jaggi’s Energy Park. It’s hard to say no to free works of art.

“I’m a collector, not a car dealer,” he says. “Last year, I

got nine restored cars from a man who had to go to a retirement home. Nine cars! He said to me, ‘What am I going to do with my cars? I want people to be able to see them.’

“So, about my cars,” he says, moving around the showroom. “Some of my first were Studebakers. They’re not common here in Switzerland. For me, they make the best cars—the best design. I was 17 years old when I had my first Studebaker from the United States. Then I worked on it and it was restored. So now we have a museum that is open for everyone to see them.”

With so many to choose from, you think it might be difficult to pick favorites. Jaggi doesn’t bat an eyelash at that question. There’s no hesitation.

“Favorite car,” he says. “I have two. The Mercedes 300 SL and the Facel Vega2, which is very rare. They only built 182 of this car. It was the fastest car in the world in 1964. And the Mercedes 300 SL has two versions: the Gullwing and the convertible. I have two. The other one is at home.”

Jaggi owns about 50 cars. A few others in the collection include a 1950 Panhard Dyna X-86, 1932 Packard Viktoria Graber Cabriolet, 1951 Studebaker Champion and a 1950 Citroën 15 Six.

But no matter how many questions are thrown his way about the cars, he keeps switching the conversation back to the gas pumps.

“I just like the design of them so much,” he says, pointing out a Polly gas pump that came all the way from Indiana. “It’s an object of design. After the ‘70s, the pumps look all the same. The old gas pumps are pretty.” □

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