

## CALIFORNIA

## Citizen Fred

Theo Stich apparently tells a simple tale: A 19 year old farmhand called Franz Ferdinand Ruckli, now age 75, from Meggen, Canton Lucerne, moves in late 1949 to work on his uncle's farm in California. He swiftly embraces the new ways, delights in the advanced technologies and, being frugal, soon buys his dream car. Yet the Empire he has joined in mind and body takes hold of his destiny: Though not a citizen, he is drafted, swiftly trained in warfare, and sent to war as an infantryman, allegedly only to take part in a "police action", that is, to safeguard the established order, since by 1950 the World War II alliance between the American-led West and the Soviet Russia-led



East had collapsed. Under the latter aegis North Korean troops had invaded the American-controlled Korean South in order to unite the country under its Soviet-like political system. A bloody war in which Fred must fight on the frontline leaves an indelible, if hidden mark

on him. The troops of the West advance all the way to Manchuria's border then are driven back by massive Chinese forces until an armistice basically reestablishes the country's division.

On his return Fred Ruckli marries a fellow Swiss from Canton Graubünden, drives for decades a produce truck in the San Francisco region, is devoted to his family, buys a home and later also a vacation cottage in the mountains. He visits his old home, retraces its layout, and proudly if tastefully displays his American-ness. Returned home to California he gradually adjusts to his wife's debilitating stroke that leaves her without speech and memory.

With a fine hand Theo Stich features how Fred Ruckli has absorbed American surface egalitari-

anism that hides well defined hierarchies based on wealth, origin, and race, yet is starkly expressed in a person's area of residence, type of car, and club membership. Although this Swiss American remains apolitical, he accepts the claim that American troops are simply used to defend democracy and implement the country's mission as policeman of the world. Without intruding and throughout the film Theo Stich lets expressive faces tell the story he intends to convey. He skillfully uses official film footage to show how private lives are inseparably enmeshed in the manipulation of power on the world stage. With impeccable tact and marvelous nuance Theo Stich's film draws a portrait of a proud Swiss American that is beautiful, honest, and suggestive.

Leo Schelbert

**This film was chosen by Pro Helvetia for the series "Encounters of the Swiss Kind" as part of the "Swiss Roots" promotion. In the US, the first presentation will take place on November 9, the day before Veteran's day at the Swiss Embassy in Washington.**

**For public screenings of the film please refer to director Theo Stich.**

**A DVD is available containing two versions: NTSC format for the US with comments and subtitles in English and PAL format for Europe in German. Price, including postage, for private use only: \$ 50.00. DVD's can be ordered directly from**

**LUMENFILM, Theo Stich, Ottikerstr. 10, CH-8006 Zürich or at [www.lumenfilm.ch](http://www.lumenfilm.ch).**

## Next Regional News:

# 1/2007- Copy deadline: Dec. 7, 06

Mailing date: Jan. 25, 07

# 2/2007- Copy deadline: Febr. 22, 07

Mailing date: April 4, 07

## Please send contributions to:

Mrs. Wal Baur  
2364 Sunset Curve  
Upland, CA 91784-1069

Phone/Fax: (909) 931 7708

E-mail: [wbaur@adelphia.net](mailto:wbaur@adelphia.net)