

# NIAGARA TENNIS NEWS

August 11 2010

**SPECIAL EDITION**



There has been positive feedback to some of the features included in NTN about other clubs. Accordingly, this special edition is for those of you who might be interested in a remarkable place I visited last summer. This tennis club is located in the municipality of Celle, a town in northern Germany with a population of 71,000. There are 14 tennis clubs in the town. Not courts in public parks. Actual tennis clubs. They aren't all as elegant as the one you're about to see (though some are considerably larger), but they all have a clubhouse and showers in the locker rooms ... and they all have clay courts.

Think for a moment about how wide a net you'd have to cast out from Niagara-on-the-Lake to encircle 71,000 people. Not far. We have our own 15,000. Then we'd just need to add a piece of Niagara Falls (80,000) and a piece of St Catharines (130,000). Now try to imagine 14 tennis clubs in that area. Phenomenal. It happens in Germany because the culture recognizes adult sport as a critical part of a healthy lifestyle. [Editorial comment: we should be moving in this direction in our culture!]

The building you're looking at above was built in 1978, but everything still seems like new. It's designed to need very low maintenance because it's completely unstaffed. It operates exactly as our club does : as a member cooperative. Not every member gets a key to the clubhouse, but every group and activity does. Everything is operated on the honor system and everyone is expected to leave the clubhouse better than they found it. A caretaking service does a two-hour cleaning once a week.

The first two photos below show the main gathering room in the clubhouse. The photo below them is the adjacent courtyard area with a simple retractable roof, making it either an extension of the outside patio area or an extension of the inside space.





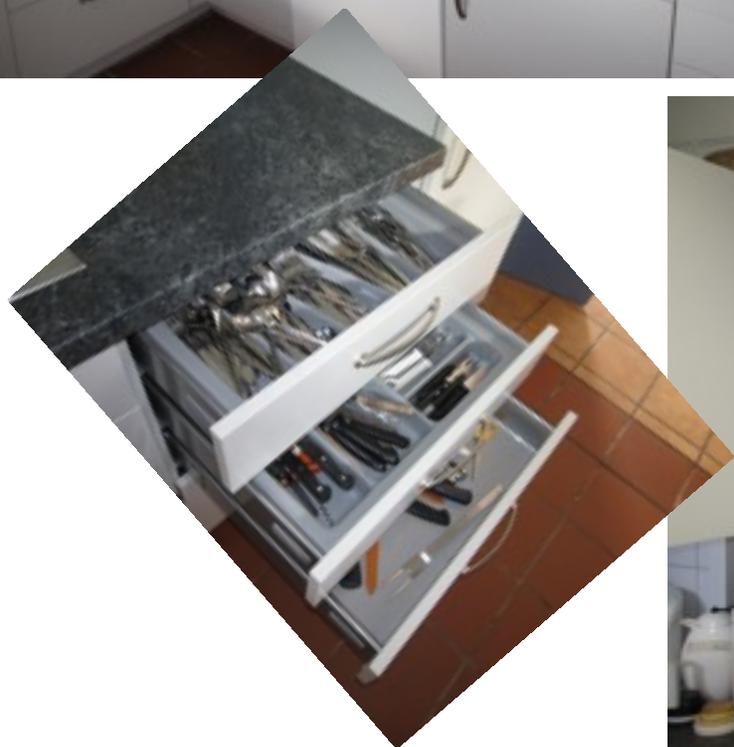
This bar is part of the large gathering area seen above. The wine frig is at the left end of the photo (seen in enlarged form left). The beer is always on tap ... no bottles! (keg photo right) And the honor box is where the members deposit their payments.

There is absolutely nothing that is disposable. The bar includes a special dishwasher with racks designed specifically for beer and wine glasses. Everyone cleans up after themselves.





The kitchen is fully equipped, though simple. Again, nothing disposable is permitted. All food is eaten on china plates and with stainless-steel cutlery. Everything is loaded into the dishwasher and everyone cleans up after themselves.



The frig for soft drinks and water is a good example of the attention to detail in evidence everywhere. In the larger photo (left) you can see a couple of blue boxes at the bottom. In the smaller photo, you see that one box is a place to deposit bottle caps (with a bottle-opener held at the ready by means of a magnet), and the other box is for deposit of payments.





Bathrooms don't lend themselves to photography, but this gives the general idea. There are large changing areas and several showers. The shelf area (below) is for stowing tennis racquets and bags ... players don't take them into the clubhouse or patio area. The cushions on top are custom-made to fit the picnic table benches ... they can be seen in place in photos farther on.



In Germany, beer is always taken seriously. This is the motor-operated hoist which lowers and raises the kegs into the underground storage locker.



And, oh yes, there's tennis! Eight beautiful red clay courts. The club contracts with a maintenance service to take care of all their needs ... watering, rolling, seasonable refurbishment. The members do a regular drag at the end of each play.

What's the cost for all this?

There are 175 members, paying 450 euros (\$600) each year for a family, 250 euros (\$330) for an individual.



Do the members use the clubhouse? I'll say! This "regular group" plays tennis at 5:00 every Wednesday afternoon, then the players shower and have dinner together. Each week, two players take a turn at bringing the food. The other players take turns buying bottles of wine ... as many as it takes to last the evening! Two other players will take their turn doing cleanup.

Other groups are seen gathered at other tables on the same evening. Everyone shares the space comfortably and easily.

All quite civilized!







