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Dressed for the occasion ... in a home-made costume

AS I am writing these words I think back just two weeks to when I was still high on a cloud of excitement having returned from the Unspunnenfest 1981, in Interlaken.

British by birth and residence I gained dual nationality when I married my Swiss husband. Whenever we have visited Switzerland it has always been wonderful and I made an effort to know in some degree my second country.

Learning national dances in a weekly dancing class our daughters also had to find out about the costumes of the countries whose dances they learned: I developed an interest in folk costumes and, not surprisingly, especially those of Switzerland.

About 15 years ago I began to dress dolls, building up a collection of 26, one representative of each canton and the autonomous half-cantons. This entailed study from books, scrapbooks collected over years, and particularly watching for and photographing costumes whenever possible.

With the set completed, if not perfect, from time to time I displayed my dolls and books, talking and showing slides to illustrate the wealth and variety of Swiss costumes.

Still working from pictures, it was not a great step to attempt to make myself a costume of Basle, my husband's home canton, and I wore this when I was giving a display.

In 1975 I dared to take it to Switzerland and wore it for the first time at a village folk-festival in Wengen. What an ice-breaker it proved! With all its faults, I still

found friendship.

In reasonable French but minimal German I had to explain where the costume originated and why I wore it. I came home determined to learn some German and spent a year at evening classes so that now, while not fluent, I can at least make myself understood most of the time.

Later, in 1978, I eventually met a Basle costume dressmaker hoping to learn from her the details of winter dress which is also used on Sundays in summer. She showed me the details, patiently explaining technical points – not easy with my halting French and German.

When she saw what I had done for a festival costume, her congratulations that I had even tried to work just from pictures were mixed with her laughter at what was a travesty of the real thing. We started again with more explanations as she showed me what I should have done and with her request "Please, do it again."

Once home, during the next two or three months I sewed in all my spare minutes to finish the two costumes while her instructions were still fresh in my mind.

Recently she loaned me her own pattern so that I could make the summer workday costume, thus completing my trio. Through her I've also been able to buy second-hand felt and straw hats

to wear with the festival and summer dresses, respectively.

My work during those weeks in 1978 was rewarded when my husband gave me a wonderful weekend trip that September. I went to Lucerne to share in the Costume Festival which was part of their octocentennial celebrations.

There I met some members of the Baslertrachtenverein and was able to take part in the grand procession with them on the Sunday. I also met Christa, a Baslerin whose parents now live in Zurich while she is married to an American and lives in California.

The Unspunnenfest is something about which I had read and dreamed for years. The diary of events issued by the Swiss Tourist Office showed that in 1981 this festival would coincide with the International Folklore Rally in Fribourg and I decided to be there.

For a variety of reasons I went along leaving my understanding husband to fend for himself. Fribourg proved interesting but was disappointing to me in that the Swiss participation was only to be during the final weekend when I had already moved on for Unspunnen.

However, the long weekend which I spent in Interlaken was a climax to a holiday which I will never forget.

Having travelled from Fribourg in my workday costume, I immediately found the usual warmth and friendliness. "Grueli", "What costume is that?", "Where do you come from?", and smiles to greet me all the way.

Alone, I was never lonely! One example is that on the Friday evening as I waited in a restaurant for the meal I had ordered, I was invited to join a couple from Solothurn and we stayed together to enjoy the evening's folklore concert in the Kursaal.

An added joy in my planning was the news that Christa was to be in Switzerland at that time and we had arranged to meet in Interlaken on Saturday. So much to share and talk about, so much to see and to photograph – tongues worked hard but cameras were not far behind.

On Saturday it was the dancing rather than the yodel concert for us and on Sunday the two-hour procession of floats and groups showing history, folklore and costumes, then the "Voice of the Alps" concert on the Unspunnen meadow rather than the more energetic Schwingen and Steinstossen contests.

Christa, like me, loves costumes and at home in California, where she teaches embroidery and needlecrafts, she includes Swiss traditional crafts in her repertoire.



A young boy gets the feel of a stall at the Onion Market

Onion market is 600 years old

ONE of Berne's oldest and most popular annual events, the Onion Market – or *Zibelemärit* – takes place this year on November 23.

The event dates back nearly six centuries and, so the story goes, would never have been held at all had it not been for a disastrous fire in 1405 which destroyed much of the city.

It appears that in the months

following the blaze the citizens of neighbouring Fribourg helped the Bernese reconstruct the city. In recognition of their help, the Fribourg people were given the right for all time to hold an annual one-day market in Berne.

These days the market comprises some several hundred stalls spread over city centre squares, along the tree-lined Bundesgasse and spilling over into side streets as well. Most of the stalls now come from the Berne area itself. And while onions still remain the big attraction, you'll now find stalls selling

on stume

I met some of my Basle friends from 1978 and found that while others would represent Basle-Stadt in the main procession on Sunday they, with the Drum and Fife Band, would be adding to the festive atmosphere with their own processions along the Hoheweg during Saturday and after the main procession on Sunday, and I was invited to join them on these occasions.

This I did with great delight. Days which started rather grey and overcast brightened so that the main events all took place in glorious sunshine with the Jungfrau clear and beautiful. In a wonderful setting it was a superb weekend.

On Monday I had to return home. Though I justified my return in costume by saying that a summer dress was easier to pack than Sunday costume that was only my excuse. Really, I was still so excited, so full of the events of the weekend, that I found it hard to come back to reality.

Coming home in costume extended by dream which had come true. As I boarded the train for the final stage I was told that I looked as if I'd come "straight from 'The Sound of Music'" – well, I almost had except that it had been called the "Voice of the Alps". – **Mrs Janet Rauch, 353 Baddow Road, Chelmsford.**

During the Unspunnen Herdsman Festival, muscular Swiss attempt to throw a stone weighing 185 pounds for more than 11.2 ft., the existing record. The festival, which was held from August 31 to September 6, at Interlaken, included country folk dancing, alphorn playing, flag throwing demonstrations, cowbell ringing, wrestling matches and a costumed parade of over 5,000 Swiss people.



hot chestnuts, confectionery (for the children there are "onions" made of peppermint and marzipan), as well as antiques, handicrafts and a variety of other goods.

The first-time visitor in particular cannot fail to be impressed at the sight of tons of golden, glistening onions strung up from stalls or spread out in baskets and bundles.

The market has seen every kind of weather from Indian summer to wintry snowstorms but such is its attraction that whatever the climate visitors

never fail to turn up in their tens of thousands, and brisk business is always assured.

Towards the late afternoon and evening the event takes on the air of a festival open to all-comers. A confetti battle develops – a reminder of past centuries when it was nuts that were thrown among the crowds by a mounted municipal official in an attempt to attract more public attention to his *Zibelemärit* proclamation.

Then the crowds move on to Berne's restaurant and cafés to sample the day's special dishes – made, of course, from onions.

Events of the month

Nov. beginning	Richterswil, Bülach, Regensberg, Eglisau, Winterthur, Wollishofen, Wiedikon	«Räbechilbi», turnip lanterns procession; ancient custom
Nov 4/5, 10, 12	Zurich, Winterthur, Vevey, Visp	Martinmas markets
Nov 11	Sursee	«Gansabhouet», historic custom
Nov 20 – 24	Sierre	St. Katharina market
Nov 23	Berne	«Zibelmärit», traditional onion market
Nov 28	Sarnen	Kägiswil: St. Nicholas procession
Dec 4	Küssnacht a.R.	«Klausjagen» and procession