

Laura Enslin tells tale of two cultures --U.S. and Sweden

by Nancy Huff



RESTING UP—Between classes at the Gymnasium, sits in the hallway much like the rest of her classmates do touching up on some classwork until her next class. Laura said classes are not as rigidly conducted as they were at Dallas High School.

Mt. Zion church plans yard sale

A collection of odds and ends, furniture, antiques, dishes, plants, produce and home-baked goods will be displayed by the women of Mount Zion United Methodist Church at their annual yard sale on Saturday, Aug. 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tables will

be set up under the trees behind the church. The refreshment stand will be in operation and there is ample parking on the large paved lot. In case of rain, the sale will be held in the church basement.

The church has been standing on Mount Zion Road in Exeter Township for the past 125 years. For those who haven't been around quite that long, the simplest directions are to take Carverton Road from Route 309 in Trucksville and follow it to the end, turning left at the stop sign. Just beyond Sandsdale Farm, turn right up the hill and continue for approximately two miles.

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Not too many people can proudly boast of belonging to two families. But 18-year-old Laura Enslin of Trucksville can. Her first family is Mr. and Mrs. Richard Enslin of Trucksville. Her second is the Irma Dryssen family of Sweden.

Laura lived in Sweden for one year under the Dallas Rotary Exchange Student Program. She boarded a jet at Kennedy Airport on Aug. 12, 1976 and returned just a few weeks ago on July 12. The year she spent in Sweden was new, different and educational, she said. It opened her eyes to see more of the world than just the United States.

Laura's Swedish family was not what Laura called "typical Swedish family". Irma Dryssen was widowed a year and housed three of her own sons and foster sons. The older boy, Peder, 19, was living in New York on an exchange program. One of the foster children, Ralf, 11, returned to Germany at Christmas time. The other boys are Fredrik, 17, Magnus, 14, Christian, 12, and Tomas, 12.

Prior to their father's death, the Dryssen family cared for youths with drug problems as well as housing several foster children. Even now, Irma works nine days a month at the University of Stockholm, in addition to singly caring for her large family.

Their large house, which is 25 miles north of Stockholm, is situated among rolling hills in a small summer community. Most of the residents in this community, Laura said, owned both summer and winter residences. The Dryssens, however, remained in the village year round.

Laura traveled by bus and train for 12 miles to attend the Gymnasium in Taby. The Gymnasium is the equivalent to the American grades 10 through the sophomore year in college. But, Laura said, there were only three years of the gymnasium, so an exact equation is impossible.

The schooling, she said, is more intense than in the United States. Upon en-

tering the Gymnasium, students may choose to follow any of the 21 courses of study. Laura chose science, which she said turned out to be the hardest.

Laura's courses included physics, chemistry, math, history and Spanish. She was tutored in Swedish. She had to learn Swedish first hand. While in school at Dallas High School, Laura said she had trouble with German, but Swedish, being in an atmosphere where the culture required a thorough speaking knowledge, came much easier. English is taught in the Swedish school beginning in grade three.

The Dryssens spoke excellent conversational English, Laura said, but she forbade them to utter a word, anxious to learn as much Swedish as she could.

Although the academic pressure is much greater, the school did not enforce strict attendance policies or require students to remain on campus during their free time. Laura

said the class work load was sufficient to encourage students to attend all classes. During her free time, she occasionally went shopping in the many various stores in Taby. At lunch, even though the meals were free, students were not required to eat in the cafeteria.

The Gymnasium offered no extra-curricular activities, so much of Laura's after school activities included shopping, painting and participating in the community Sports Club.

The Sports Club planned an American football game once, Laura said, but the players were not quite as experienced as American players. The biggest attraction of the day, she said, were the cheerleaders. Laura and another American girl led the cheers.

As in America, the popular dress for the Swedish teenagers is blue jeans. The only difference, Laura said, was they wore them much tighter than she was accustomed to. The popular shoe was the "clog" and the Swedes have been wearing "clogs" for ages.

While in Sweden, Laura amassed a collection of Swedish glassware, candles and candleholders. She also purchased a black and white, decoratively woven shawl from Israel which she said was worn by only the communist women.

Her most treasured possession, however, is a pair of reindeer hide, Laplander boots, which she oils regularly with fish oil to preserve the color.

The Swedes, Laura said, are very orderly, thin people. Their thinness is amazing, Laura said, because they have a very

starchy diet. She even gained weight while living there. The main diet consists of fish, she said, with breads and potatoes, but very few vegetables. Because Sweden is so far north, the vegetable growing season is short. The foods are prepared in the same fashion as the United States.

Most of the teenagers are very politically minded, Laura said. Even though she had friends who were communists and socialists, most of them were the Moderata or the Pro-Americans. The only difference she could see between teenagers here and there, was that in Sweden equal rights apply to all.

The students are given more freedom to think about and discuss politics, Laura said, and world affairs. Laura said she feels many of Americans her age pay little attention to world politics. She plans to keep abreast of many more things now than she did before she lived in Sweden.

Men and women earn equal wages, she said. The children are considered adults at age 16 and frequently argue about politics. The men don't extend many courtesies to the women, Laura said. One time, she went to a discotheque with a boy friend, and he left. She had to walk back home. This, she said, was not considered unusual.

Laura spent much of her free time traveling. Over the Christmas break, she spent three weeks in Austria skiing with the family. She also traveled with the state church (Lutheran) to Norway. Most of her traveling time, however, was spent exploring Sweden's southern country.

Sweden has a good public transportation service, Laura said. Most of the time she was able to use her inter-rail pass, costing very little to travel very far.

The long winter nights and long summer days amazed Laura at first. During the winter, the sun would rise around 9 or 10 a.m. but would set around 2 p.m.

Sweden, Laura said, is a beautiful country with rolling hills, much smaller than Pennsylvania's. Many lakes are scattered throughout Sweden, and as Laura says, "There's water everywhere."

The Enslin family is moving to Charleston, Ill. in a few weeks. Laura will attend Eastern Illinois University in that town. But someday she said she would like to go back to Sweden and visit her second mom and her second family. But since everything costs at least 50 per cent more in Sweden than the United States, that time will not come in the very near future.

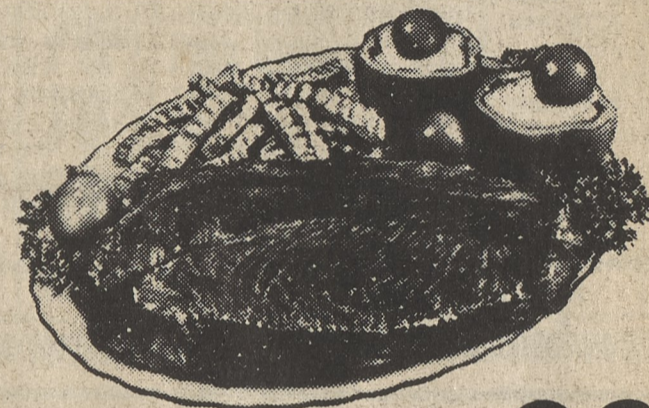


AFTER SCHOOL—Although the school offered no extracurricular activities, Laura and some friends stayed after school to paint pictures to hang in the otherwise bare hallways.

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