

## B52 EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF FESTIVAL IS IT?

PROJECT: EUROPE 2011

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The whole village seemed excited about the opening of the semi-annual festival in Broggingen. The first beer barrel tap wouldn't be driven until 6 PM so that left a lot of time to ponder. "Exactly what is a Stockbrunnenfest," I asked our host, Wolfgang Schnaiter.



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The Stockbrunnen is the name of our water fountain at the end of the street,” he responded.

“Is there anything special about this fountain,” I asked.

“No, not really,” he replied, “But we honor it as the source of our water.”

“So, there’s a ceremony?” I asked.

“No,” he responded. “We just crack open a keg of beer and start drinking.”

Deciding to shelve further investigation until later, I asked Anita to show us something of the area around Broggingen.

She immediately took us to the hills surrounding their low-lying village. They're covered with vineyards although there are some odd empty patches mixed in. "These vines belong to individuals in the village," she said. "Almost everyone has a patch to grow grapes." When I asked about the vacant patch next to her she said, "Some people grow too old to care for their vines and just clear their land." When I asked what happens when the grapes ripen she said, "We care for them until they're ready and then give them to my brother to make wine. The grape prices from the wineries are so low we don't even bother to sell them anymore," she said. "Besides, his wines taste better because they're free."



She took us on a driving tour of the countryside including the small village of Tutschfelden where she was raised. Her parents, although in their 80's, still maintain their plot of vines and grow a garden in their backyard. Anita planned to make soup out of the vegetables her mother picked for us.



We then hiked up to the church for the wedding of a girl who used to babysit their daughters. I had little interest until I learned the bride would be releasing doves.



The groom must belong to a local fire department because men in uniform created a passageway out of fire hoses for them to traverse on the way to the birds. My interest sprang from a photo I once saw of a bride releasing a dove. She was so enthusiastic that, when she threw the bird in the air, her breasts followed right out of her dress. While I wasn't wishing this girl any embarrassment, if it happened I wanted to capture the moment.



Perhaps the bride saw the same photo and took some precautions because nothing like that occurred. Since I invested some time in taking the pictures, I hope you enjoy them.



Six o'clock came none too soon and we drove the MG the few short blocks to the festival site and parked discreetly in front. It immediately drew a crowd blocking the entry to the Festival.



Wolfgang convinced the organizers that everything would be OK if they allowed us to park the MG inside the Festival area so it could be admired without blocking traffic. Of course, we didn't mind. Who knows? After so many beers someone might convince themselves that a 1954 MG is just what they need to harvest their grapes.



Just like any community event there were opening ceremonies. The mayor of the regional district spoke to the gathered crowd and even mentioned our presence. I knew he was referring to us after hearing the word "Californie" twice. Since Louise is of the Schnaiter family she was especially welcomed,



An expert at opening kegs was brought in to sink a tap into the bung-hole and then the beer flowed. Contents of the first keg are free and passed out to the crowd until the keg is empty. In true political tradition, the mayor was the first to hand out the free beer.

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A genuine German brass band struck the first note and the Fountain Festival was underway. The musicians come from the various villages in the region and play not only oom pah pah music but contemporary pieces as well. After all, you have to find some way to attract the younger crowd to these events after the free beer runs out.



Everyone gets into the spirit including the band director who sips the suds between numbers. The musicians aren't so lucky and play dry until the break.

“The real purpose of the Festival is to raise money for local groups,” Wolfgang informed me. “I belong to the Historical group. Those people over there are raising money for the volunteer fire department.” He pointed to temporary stands in the blocked off street. “Others have their own causes.”

I nosed around with my camera looking for the items usually found at a U.S. festival. There was no bake sale, no crafts on display, no self-help books, no organic garden displays and no *Fräulein* Stockbrunnenfest beauty contest.







What I did find was a lot of eating and drinking going on. Our family was dining at an open-air restaurant being operated by volunteers for a local cause.



The volunteer fire department rented a beer trailer and, in order to quench the rampant thirst, was dispensing the golden nectar as fast as they could open the taps.



The local sports club took over a barn and turned it into a swinging nightclub, complete with a DJ playing the music.

Homemade centerpieces graced the tables but, once again, food, beer and wine were the driving forces.





Anita and Wolfgang did their part for the local History Club by pulling a shift as bartenders at “The Youngtimer’s Club” set up in somebody’s garage. An automotive theme was chosen with old Nurburgring posters on the wall for décor and automobile seats for chairs. In a break with tradition, rum was the drink of the day.



I’m no slouch at downing my share of beer but I couldn’t hold a candle to these pros. Even the old timers were still lifting their glasses when Louise and I pulled out the keys to our “apartment” and slipped away into the night. The festival still had two nights to go and we decided to pace ourselves or we wouldn’t last. The reputation of America’s Schnaiter family was at stake.

Louise and Ray saving the family honor in Germany.