

Personal memories

David Withrington

Peterborough, UK, 2010

A year as IYF President 1971-72

Officers of the Federation are elected by delegates of member organisations at an annual General Assembly. In August 1971, the GA took place in Filzmoos, in the Austrian mountains, marking the 15th anniversary of the founding of IYF in nearby Salzburg.



*IYF General Assembly, Filzmoos, Austria
above: Josef Spritzendorfer
left: dressing up 'Austrian style' - Ulla Liefeldt
and Charles Bechet*

photos: David Withrington

The celebrations included dressing up in traditional Austrian costumes. I remember vividly Ulla - a beautiful Swedish girl - in a 'dirndl' and Charles - an archetypal Luxembourgish - in 'lederhosen'. They made an impressive couple, framed by the alpine scenery. Our host, Josef Spritzendorfer from the ÖNJ, serenaded us on an accordion and made frequent references to the mountain view: "noch eine schöner blick auf der Bischofsmütze". Josef was to become Secretary General of the Federation, a post I had held for the previous two years. I had the honour of being voted in as President, at the start of what was to be a busy and eventful year for IYF and for world conservation. As IYF President, I participated in the following events:

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| August 1971 | - International Youth Conference, Hamilton, Canada |
| November 1971 | - IYNGO environment meeting, Geneva, Switzerland |
| December 1971 | - European Working Conference on Environmental Education, Rüşchlikon, Switzerland (as Rapporteur) |
| | - IYF Executive Board meeting, Amsterdam, NL |
| April 1972 | - IYF Executive Board meeting, UK |
| June 1972 | - UN Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, Sweden |
| August 1972 | - IYF General Assembly, Herrljunga, Sweden |
| | - First intercamp in Poland, Mielno; |
| | and meeting with Polish Environment Minister, Warszawa |

My day-to-day duties in my presidential year included writing and mailing 514 official IYF letters. All this with no remuneration - though I was re-imbursed postage expenses and the cost of train and boat tickets. For me it was a true labour of love - an honour to do this work on a voluntary basis. However, I am tempted to quote the lyrics from the long-running stage musical *Les Misérables*, which I had the pleasure of seeing in 2010 in the company of my predecessor as IYF President, Fred van der Vegte: "My friends, my friends, don't ask me...what our sacrifice was for".

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International Youth Federation for Environmental Studies and Conservation (IYF)

An account of the involvement of young
people in conservation from 1950 to 2010



Niedersachsen