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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Green Mountain Mummers celebrate their 50th
2 anniversary season this weekend

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4 TEXT BODY:

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5 The Green Mountain Mummers mark their 50th
6 anniversary season on the last weekend of October. On Saturday,
7 Oct. 25, and Sunday, Oct. 26, the group will present its symbolic
8 death-and-resurrection street theater, rain or shine, in seven
9 locations in Windham County. They are dedicating their
10 performances to the memory of Stuart Strothman, a member of
11 many years, who died last April.

The group of 10 (mostly) Windham County residents is the oldest continuing sword dance and mumming troupe in the United States. Founded in 1975, the group operates in the manner of the old English morris and sword dancers from which the dances were originally collected: they meet to practice and perform only once a year. The group's mummers play has been characterized as a "live political cartoon," often drawing on current events and providing social commentary through humor.

The sword dance was collected in northern England, but has been developed by Green Mountain Mummers with its own Vermont character.

Six dancers weave and turn intricate figures holding long, inflexible metal "swords" without breaking the ring while accompanied by live music. Each figure ends with the making of a "lock" of the swords in a progressively more complicated manner.

The final lock of eight swords is the fateful one which traps an Innocent Bystander in the middle and causes his (mock) death. After the antics of a questionable Doctor fail to revive the victim, the Fool saves the day with a magic ritual.

Visiting customs have long been an important part of the human existence. Caroling at mid-winter, morris dancing in the spring, and mumming in the fall are all related by this common thread of the need to reach out to one's neighbors at significant times of the year. The audience for such performances is just as important as the performers, and they can participate in the ritual both during the mummers play and afterward, when the dancers pass the hat to collect donations from viewers. It is the exchange that brings luck and the promise of spring's return.

The Green Mountain Mummers' full schedule for Halloween weekend in Windham County is as follows:

- Saturday, Oct. 25: Samuel Elliot Apartments, Brattleboro, 11 a.m.; Pliny Park, Main Street, Brattleboro, 11:45 a.m.; Brattleboro Common, Park Place, 1 p.m.; Whetstone Inn, Marlboro, 2:30 p.m.

47 • Sunday, Oct. 26: Williamsville Town Center, 11 a.m.;

48 Dummerston Center Common, noon; The Putney Diner, Main

49 Street, 1 p.m.

50 For more information or directions to any of the

51 performances, call 802-254-9019.

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