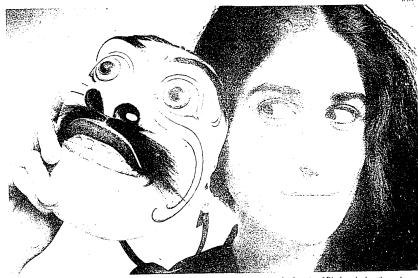
Suburban Life

Thursday, January 31, 1980

Legends told with the mask dances of Java



Laurie Ross, who has made a commitment to perpetuate the mask-dances of Java, assumes the character of Djauk as she dons the mask. While dancing, Djauk becomes her alter-ego.

By LORAINE McCLISH

The Farmington Hills resident spent The Farmington Hills resident spent a year in that country studying under lbu Darsih, a 90-year-old dance master who carried that repertoire in her head, learning the ancient and tradi-tional movements of the country's five classic mask dances.

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"We think Ibu Darsih is about 90, because there were no birth certificates there when she was born, no written history for that matter," she said, "and my sponsors were afraid she would be gone before her art was passed down." The artist of mime and mask improvisation explained that her mentor was without children, a particular misformens ince arts and crafts in the Java villages are traditionally passed down.

Ramayana and Mahabaharta, two Indian epic poems. Movements come out of the folk stories integrated into these poems.' - Laurie Ross

'All of the traditional dances stem from the

from one generation to the next.
"One family will specialize in mask, another in bead work, another in leather puppels, maybe, but always through the children," Ms. Ross said. "So it is rather sad that I am a Westerner and will be passing it on here."

Ms. Ross has all of Ibu Darsin's movements of the five main characters in the folk dances documented in photographs now, complete with the legends he is now teaching to students in Detroit's International Institute.

SHEP PASSES along what the legends.

SHE PASSES along what she learned

one step further with mask and mime, sound and motion theater games for the mentally handicapped in Birming-ham's FAR Conservatory.

"I think it is important for these youngers to get outside of themselves for awhile. They can take on another character with the mask, improvising with who-you-are, who-do-you-want be games, losing identity behind the mask," she said of the new therapy classes.

Ms. Ross returned from the Indone-sian island fluent in the language of the

alized that the places on my body where she took much trouble rubbing palm leaves were the exact spots where she wanted my muscles to devel-

where she wanted my muscles to dever-"STEN SHE left Ibu Daris Darsish she was given a gift of a highly decorated beaded girdle that is not only an intria-sic part of her dancing costome, but also her annole.

The many-pieced cos-tome has a special significance, "even the four extra inches of batik wrapped around my stomach to make my stom-ach stick out four extra inches," she said.



The Old Man is one of Laurie Ross' favor-ite mask characters. It is the only mask ac-companying one of the five Sundanese dances with cut-out eyes and mouth which allows the dancer mare room. the dancer more room



The pink wooden mask of Rumiang is held by Laurie Ross in full costume, comprised of about a dozen different pieces. Her delicate and extravagently beaded girdle is a gift from her teacher,

though most of the outfit was hand-sewn by herself. The base of her headpiece is fashioned from human hair.



bem represents a female servant. She is humorous, sometimes silly, and is often used as intermission entertainment between the tainment between the acts of a very serious play. Or, her character would be suitable to amusing very young children.

The mask of Tem-

Staff photos by Dick Kelley