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Sabrina, the eight year old child with a 60 year old body together with her best friend Shila.

SABRINA, THE 60 YEAR OLD CHILD

Sabrina is the only child in Switzerland who suffers from an extremely rare illness which makes the body age some eight times faster than normal. In fact, there are only 26 known similar cases amongst children in the whole world.

Sabrina is eight years old, 99 cm tall and weighs just on 9½ kgs. She acts, behaves and thinks exactly like an eight year old child but her body is that of a person over 60 years of age.

Sabrina loves pop music, she plays her own key-board and often is naughty just like any little girl of her age would be.

Her illness became apparent when she was one year old: very large eyes, enormous hair growth and "old skin". By the age of 4 she had lost all her hair and since then she wears a wig.

It was by pure chance that her parents one day watched a programme on TV which talked about a similar case in the USA. So for the first time, Sabrina's parents realised that there were other children in the world with the same illness. It gave them some comfort to be able to exchange views and experiences with other families in the same situation.

Life expectancy for Sabrina is unfortunately not very good: around 15 years. By then her body would have reached the grand old age of over 100 years, her inner organs will have failed and her bones would have become extremely brittle. Sabrina is quite aware of her condition. She realises that there is no known cure for her illness and that she will not have long to live. So she makes the most of it and lives every day to the fullest.

Like every other 8 year old, she goes to school where everyone loves her and she is the mascot of Untervaz (GR) near Chur, the village where she live with her loving parents.

CHANGING CAREERS

The times when young people used to learn a trade and stayed with it for the rest of their lives seem to have gone forever. In Switzerland today half the people no longer work in the profession or trade they had learnt and trained for initially. The change usually takes place before the person reached the age of 35. According to a study which extends over several generations, this tendency of changing professions and trades is increasing all the time.

POVERTY IN SWITZERLAND

A recent study on poverty revealed that at least 10% of the people in Switzerland now live below the poverty line. Surprisingly, the hardest hit are not the retired and old aged people, but persons under the age of 40, mostly families with young children.

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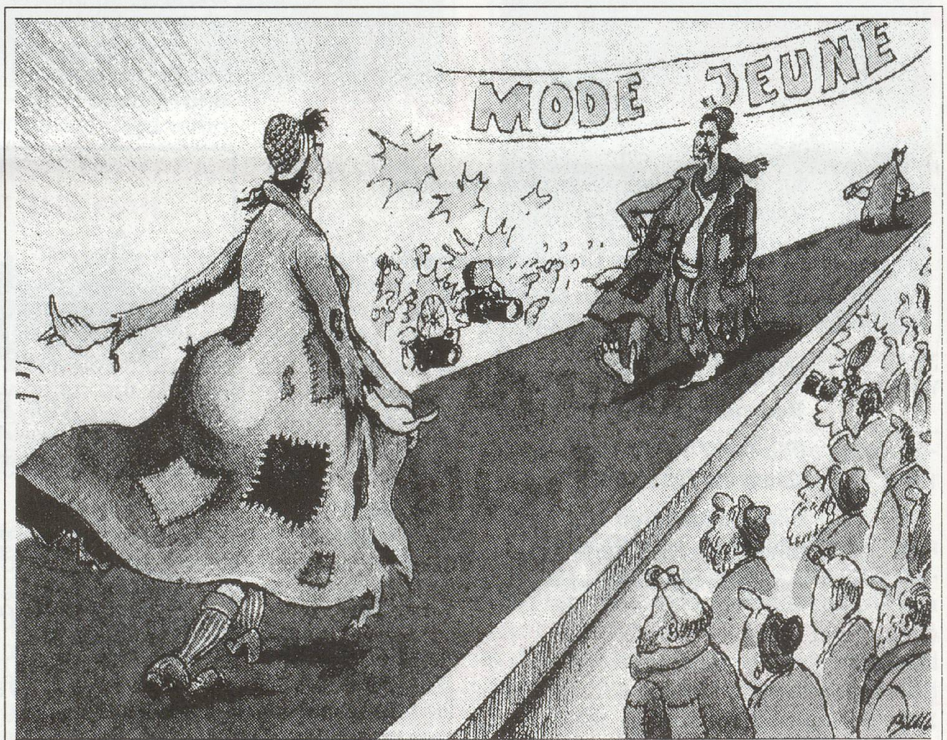
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