Jakob Weber, who died in 1920, was a vegetable and antiques dealer infamous for his rudeness and who used to carry his wares around in a basket (= Krätten). He was particularly fond of insulting the law enforcement officers. The historic figures of Karl V and Moritz of Saxony were also introduced in 1950. They were on opposing sides in the Margraves War of 1552, when Ulm supported Karl V. In 1954 the jousting troupe was increased by another couple of war lords whose activities had also affected the fortunes of Ulm: Wallenstein and initially Bernhard of Weimar. But the latter was replaced in 1970 by the better known Gustav Adolf.

Since 1950, Ulm’s Fisherman’s Jousting Tournament has been held every 4 years, if no important events or jubilees occur to upset the rhythm. The two Sundays before Oath Monday have become the traditional dates for the tournament, Oath Monday being the penultimate Monday in July. No Ulm Fisherman’s Jousting Tournament would be complete without the procession held prior to it in the morning. Around 10 o’clock in the morning some 300 participants gather in their colourful costumes at the Saumarkt in the Fishermen’s Quarter. Here the pair of jesters and the Farmer and his Wife (the lady is played by a man) perform their dance, which probably originates from early modern carnival customs, for the first time. The musical accompaniment consists exclusively of drums; the simple sequence of the dance confirms the formerly held arrogant attitude of the townspeople towards country folk: The cunning urban jesters lure the farmer’s wife away from him, which infuriates him when he finally realizes it. More recent is the minuet first performed in 1950, featuring the spear-wielding fishermen in festive red jackets and fisher girls in traditional costume. The tune is that of a traditional Ulm song.

The procession moves on. Ulm free riders in blue uniforms from 1693 head up the procession. The drumming and trumpeting Ulm “gens d’armes” on horseback and wearing their red coats from 1745 are very impressive. The brass bands wear the blue uniforms of the Ulm Town Soldiers; the outfit dates back to 1770/1780. The drummers, who accompany the jesters’ dances in the morning and the jousting in the afternoon, are dressed in the uniform of the Ulm Stuck Company (around 1740). Among the traditional components of the procession, originally for the purpose of collecting donations, are the specially prepared donation spears. These have a hook on the end so that the residents of the houses lining the route can hang presents on the spear, even from the upper storeys of the houses. Other members of the fishermen’s guild and their descendants who also belong to the boatmen’s society also march in the procession. The masters of the guilds, dressed in Baroque costumes, are followed by various guild members: fisher girls (“parish Fair maidens”), young fishermen, a children’s group and, to crown them all, the fishermen’s wives. A select few of the latter are allowed to ride on the horse-drawn “pageant float”.

These processions are just as wet as the jousting in the afternoon – except that the wetting is of an internal nature. However, this also raises courage levels for the afternoon’s tournament and warms the blood ready for any plunges into the sometimes cool summer waters of the Danube.

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The Fishermen’s Jousting Tournament dance: a jester forces a farmer out of the way.

Even the youngest take part.

Fisherman’s wife with child in festive costume.

Festive boat with fishermen’s wives in front of the Stadthaus.

The landlady of the Swan Inn is famous for her ribald wit.

A select few of the latter are allowed to ride on the horse-drawn “pageant float.”

These processions are just as wet as the jousting in the afternoon – except that the wetting is of an internal nature. However, this also raises courage levels for the afternoon’s tournament and warms the blood ready for any plunges into the sometimes cool summer waters of the Danube.
The drummers in their red jackets beat a tattoo. The jousting boats push off in a set of three from each bank of the Danube. The helmsmen steer the boats towards each other. The jousters stand on the stern, leaning on their 2.80-meter-long lances, called “spears”. When the boats meet, the combatants raise their spears, press the crossbar against their shoulder, and aim the leather-cushioned tip at the breast of their opponent. Spears crash into ribs. Whoever falls into the water has lost. Whoever steps into the boat is also deemed to be lost. Whoever steps into the boat is also deemed to be lost, whereby due to a lack of horses required for the tournament, they used their boats on the river. It might really have come about like that, since the first records of the Ulm Fishermen’s Jousting Tournament originate from the 16th century:

On February 20, 1545 the council refused permission to hold a Fishermen’s Jousting Tournament. The correspon-
ding entry on the council records is the oldest indication of the practice of this custom in Ulm. The farmer and the farmer’s wife, as well as the pair of jesters, are also figures that featured in the early modern town carnival. The townsmen, the women were the personification of drollness. The figures of the white fishermen, the jesters, the farmer and the farmer’s wife probably date back to the beginnings of the tournaments. When the people of Ulm stopped celebrating carnival – that was shortly before the 30-Years War – the council urged the fishermen to hold their tournament in a way that was worthy of the Fishermen’s Jousting Tournament held by monks from Reichenau. When the first Ulm council elections at the beginning of August, the male population swore their oath to the Imperial Town Constitution. This was followed by boisterous celebrations, whereby the Fishermen’s Jousting Tournament, held every two years, enhanced the festive character of the event. When Ulm lost its status as an imperial town in 1802 and became Bavarian, the basis for the Oath Day was lost and with it the event to which the Fishermen’s Jousting Tournament was linked. It remained to be rediscovered by the nationalistic movement of the early 19th century, with its nostalgia for the middle ages.

In the 19th century, the fishermen occasionally held jousting tournaments to commemorate the loss of Oath Day. Further occasions were royal visits and other conferences and meetings. Right from the beginning, the people of Ulm had recognized the folkloristic attraction of the event. When Ulm lost its status as an imperial town in 1802 and became Bavarian, the basis for the Oath Day was lost and with it the event to which the Fishermen’s Jousting Tournament was linked. It remained to be rediscovered by the nationalistic movement of the early 19th century, with its nostalgia for the middle ages.

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