

FF. EXCHANGE 11103 – OUTBOUND REPORT.

STRATFORD ST.MARYS, CANADA ☉ NORTH ILLINOIS ☉ CENTRAL VIRGINIA. U.S.A.

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER, 2012.

No doubt, F.F.S.C. Ambassadors to Canada & USA on the recent exchange will have extra international mail spreading Christmas good cheers and good wishes from 'downunder' this year.

The exchange was a wonderful example of extending the hand of friendship, meeting as strangers leaving as friends.

Packed in the luggage was a supply of macadamia nuts along with some other special ingredients to reinforce and re-claim the origin of 'Queensland nuts' in the coast's rainforests and not Hawaii. Coffee & tea at each farewell was accompanied by a fresh batch of 'macadamia & ginger biscuits'.

This was to precede our 'cultural contribution' at each of the three farewells. Namely a skit to 'demonstrate' how we Aussies spend Christmas Day Downunder! Obviously whilst our temperature can go up and off the scale, our northern hemisphere hosts homes are deep in snow and ice – hence the difference. So with the aid of a colourful pictorial DVD, Aussie Christmas Carols & an assortment of beachwear, hats & wigs, we left our hosts with big smiles and laughter and a side of our culture unknown to them previously.



An 'oz quiz' of sayings & slang with prizes of vegemite and a game of two-up along with explanatory comments + macadamia nuts as prizes, were yet other example of ambassadors exchanging Aussie culture with our new found friends.

What aspects of Canadian & US. Culture did we receive in return? Attending the Stratford Shakespeare Festival Theatre to see 42nd Street + a backstage tour of costumes & props & the opportunity to tour Banning House, home & medical office of Dr. Banning, the inventor of insulin were but two of a great range of activities and hospitality that we shared with our Canadian hosts. Then to travel to North Illinois, just out of Chicago, to be warmly welcomed by our hosts. From an Native American museum, the Volo Auto museum with vehicles spanning 100 years, many of which were famous from TV & movies certainly got the 'rev heads' amongst us oohing and aahing. A tramp through the Volo bog gave us an insight into this form of wetlands and an early morning game of Bocce, alighted the competitive spirit of us all.

Towards the end of this phase the ED paid what I consider was a wonderful complement to Australian Ambassadors all. She said when the exchange was confirmed – the word went out "the Aussies are coming" and as ED she was overwhelmed by the club members who wanted to be involved in the exchange to host and co-host. Seemingly our reputation of having a good sense of humour and being "fun" people preceded us! Certainly I don't think we disappointed our hosts – certainly if from their reactions to our Oz Christmas Day skit was anything to go by.

Leaving the shores of Lake Michigan behind us, we flew to Charlottesville to be met by our North Virginia hosts. Charlottesville for the American history buffs is steeped in American history. Tours to Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, the 3rd US President along with a tour of the famed Virginia University of which he also

founded, gave us all an insight into a very clever and gifted man, I perhaps a man we might say was ahead of his time. Montpelier, the home of James Madison, hailed as the “father of the US constitution”, gave us all a greater appreciation of the history. A memorable wine tasting, a visit to the famed Blue Ridge Mountains, along with a visit to the Governor’s Residence in the State Capital of Richmond completed our crash course in US history and culture. The finale – the farewell whilst we again gave all and sundry a taste of Aussie Christmas Day, in turn we were also introduced to another aspect of life in Virginia – the Virginia Reel (not unlike a Scottish reel) saw hosts & ambassadors alike, clapping, skipping and dancing – all intent in in celebrating what was for everyone another wonderful phase of the exchange.



In conclusion I know that all ambassadors made wonderful personal contribution to our host’s knowledge of Australia and Australians.



A personal thanks to Patricia Barry for her great personal contribution in the design of the exchange booklet and our Aussie Christmas Day DVD. Finally I thank all the ambassadors for the wonderful co-operative spirit that they all showed during the exchange. True ambassadors all.

Marilyn Berry
Exchange Director.

