

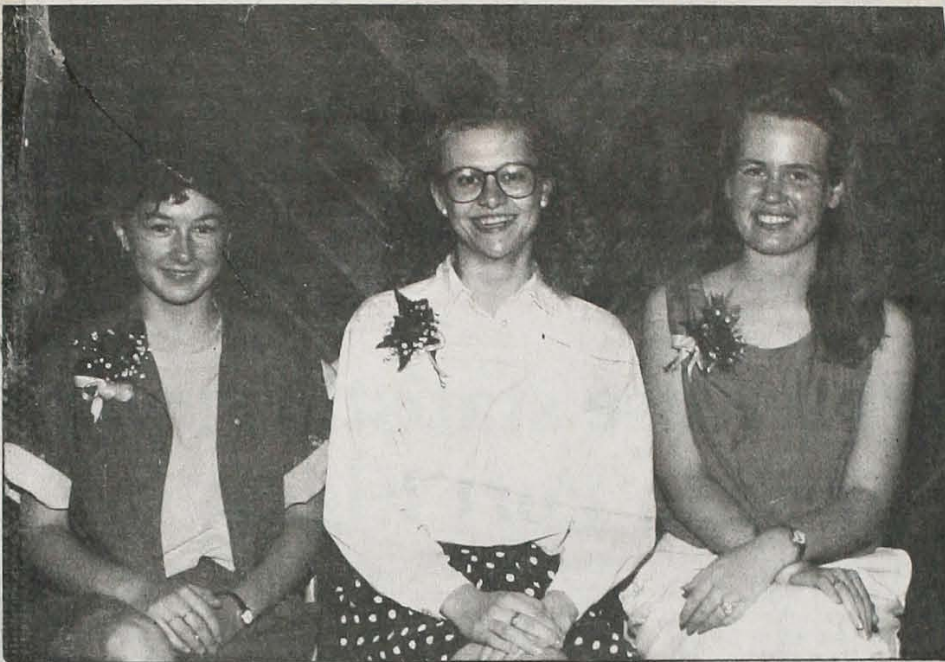
Birthdays

June 1991



We're celebrating the 30th Anniversary of our 16th Birthday Lots of Love

Joan McCulloch



Special recognition went to these three girls during Saugeen Memorial Hospital's teenage volunteer appreciation night, last week. Teresa Underhill (centre) served 400 hours, Mary McCulloch (right) 300 hours, and Jessica Walter, 200 hours.

August 8, from a one-year exchange in Dinant, Belgium, which is located one hour south of the capital city of Brussels.

"You get to know what the living and social conditions are in other countries and it really makes you appreciate what our country has to offer," McCulloch said.

Following a series of interviews and applications, McCulloch was one of the 60 Canadian students accepted into the rotary exchange program last year.

McCulloch lived with two host families during her stay in Dinant and attended Grade 11 at the College de Notre Dame de Belle Vue, a private Catholic school.

"The people in Belgium are really friendly and in school, they just treated me like a visitor," she said. "You had to make the first move when making friends, but after that they're your friends for life."

McCulloch said the school system in Belgium is much more difficult than in Canada, considering students in Belgium choose their subjects of study years in advance, which McCulloch said does not allow for any divergence if the students might choose to change their minds about future career choices.

Although Dinant's first language is French, McCulloch said she really didn't have any problems adjusting to the two host families.

"They were really friendly and open with me, but for the first little while I really dreaded supper time," she explained. "There would always be lots of people at the table and when you have five conversations going on all at the same time, it can be a bit overwhelming."

McCulloch said she overcame her communications barrier by listening to the language and finally "it just sank in."

The weather also helped to raise her spirits, as McCulloch said, during March and April a record breaking 44 degrees Celsius was the warmest Dinant has ever been since 1947.

A monthly call to her parents in Port Elgin and weekly letters from home kept McCulloch up-to-date on her family and allowed her parents to plan a trip to Dinant last March.

McCulloch said she also had the opportunity of experiencing several different aspects of culture with the other exchange students from British Columbia, Australia, Arizona and Idaho.

Lifestyles in Dinant are not unlike
Continued on Page 12A



Mary McCulloch

Continued from Page 7A

our country, she said, but towns are geometrically closer together in Belgium.

"Families are a lot closer in Belgium I noticed, but not much different than ours," McCulloch remarked. "Although I did notice that they have a bad attitude towards Americans."

McCulloch said that she was initially viewed as an American, not a Canadian, but she said they did not identify Canadians as being any different than Americans.

Any leisure time was spent with her friends or learning to make silk scarves from her host family.

During her stay in Belgium, McCulloch travelled to Italy twice, East and West Berlin, Cologne, London, France, Switzerland and Austria.

"I loved Austria, it was just beautiful," she said. "But travelling through East Berlin was a very different experience."

The exchange students visited a supermarket in East Berlin and found the quality of the products to be very poor.

"It was sort of depressing in East Berlin, it wasn't a very friendly place," she said. "But it gives you a feeling of what these people had to live with every day."

Using a public washroom or even a washroom in a restaurant cost anywhere from 25 to 35 cents.

Many different varieties of beer are the typical drink in Europe, as it is cheaper to buy than bottled water, which is their second drink of choice, since ordinary tap water is not consumed.

On her last day in Dinant, McCulloch was given a goodbye party in her honor, with over 50 people in attendance.

"It was really sad to leave everyone, but I think we'll see each other again some day," she said. "I was a bit home sick the last month I was there and I was really glad to be coming home."

Loaded down with three carry-on's and two suitcases, McCulloch said the

first thing she did when she arrived home was "go to McDonald's."

Her suitcases were filled with tantalizing chocolates and candies, authentic pieces of the Berlin Wall, perfumed soap from London and lace from Brugge.

Although she would enjoy returning to Europe at any time in the future, McCulloch said Australia would be her next destination in order to see other exchange students she met in Belgium.

Although Joan McCulloch knew her daughter was being well taken care of in Belgium, a trip to Dinant in March served to prove that aspect.

"We knew she was being well taken care of, but I think she was a bit spoiled by her host families," Joan mused. "We're really glad she's home again."

Mary will be presenting several slide shows and discussions of her exchange to several 4-H Clubs, church groups and Womens' Institutes for the next few weeks before returning to Saugeen District Secondary School for her grade 12 year.

"I would recommend the program to any student," McCulloch said. "Not many 16-year-olds are given this type of opportunity in their lifetimes."

Dr. Robert Dors is pleased to announce that
DR. MARY McCULLOCH
 has joined his practice of optometry
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