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Mount Hope Women's Institute

SBV2-2

# Exchange student writes to home

Nov/85

Darlene Monkman of Mount Hope is on a Rotary Club exchange to France. Following is a recent letter home.

Cher Rotary Club du Salut! Comment ca ra? Je rais tres bien.

I have settled in very well in Fumel, France, and I'm really enjoying myself.

I lived with my first host family for only two weeks as my host "mom" had an operation. I was to have moved back there but she's not well enough. I will be having four host families, I think. Presently I'm with my second family, the Mahincs. They own an auto parts store. Their 18-year-old daughter is spending her year near Chicago. They also have a daughter, Stephanie (13), and Micheal (10). They are very nice and I'm really enjoying myself.

My first host "dad" is an engineer at the factory in Fumel and this factory is doing business with Kennedy's of Owen Sound. It's a small world! I was able to send a package to my family with an engineer, who went to Owen Sound last month.

Presently I'm living in Monsempion-Liboo, which is a village of about 3500 and is right next to Fumel, which has about 10,000 people and that's where I go to school and where I'll be living with my fourth family. My third family lives in Montayral, which is 2 km from Fumel. There are numerous other villages close by so it makes up a fairly large population in this area. It's the factory (that makes pipes) that keeps the population here. The area is also well off with fresh fruit and vegetables. Further north there is a wine growing district and south a plum area - famous for it's prunes.

I've joined the town soccer and volleyball teams, it is a great way to meet people and to keep active.

I am hosted by a terrific Rotary Club. It is 7 years old and has 30 members. The club makes it obligatory that each member hosts me for a weekend so I have

other Rotary families. The club meets every Tuesday with meal meetings every second Tuesday. I have been to five meetings and at one meeting I showed my photo albums and scrapbook. I have yet to do my slide presentation.

Last night, I was at a meeting in which we had the district governor as a guest. The club bought my school books, my school lunches, paid my volleyball and soccer registration and gave me \$50 a month. The weekend of November 1st is my first exchange conference on the Atlantic coast at La Rochelle. It will be my first time for taking the train!

The French eat very well. Lunch is the big meal of the day and supper is eaten late compared to Canada, 7:30-8 p.m. and there is always a cheese course at supper. The French have a kind of cheese for everyday of the year!

The weather here has been excellent, up until this week the afternoons were warm enough for T-shirts. This is extraordinary weather for the season and it's also the driest autumn in forty years. It is a true Indian Summer.

I started school September 11th. The school is 2 km from where I live so I get a ride with the German Prof., who is a member of Rotary. School starts at 8 a.m. and finishes at 5 p.m.! Different to CDHS! The subjects I am taking are: five hours per week of French, three hours per week of English, two per week of math, biology, physics, geography, history and sports. I am also getting some lessons in Spanish from an assistant at my

school. My school has 385 students with three levels, Seconde, Premiere et Terminale. I am in Premiere A, with students 16 years old. I am with the same 17 girls and three boys for all my courses. The students at school are very nice and so are some teachers, but most teachers are there only to do their job. If a teacher hasn't a class he may go home. There is no school Wednesday afternoons for high school and no school at all for the public school. But my host sister and brother have to go to school Saturday morning.

This Saturday is the beginning of a ten-day school holiday. I am going with a Rotary family to Cap d'Agde on the Mediterranean coast.

A brief rundown on key events during my stay so far: visited a nearby 15th century castle, Bonaguil; met Charlie Chaplin's son and grandchildren; been to the cinema three times; visited many historic villages, including Pujols, Penne d'Agenais, Villeneuve Sul Lot, Agen, Cahors, St. Airq La Popie, Puy L'Eveque, a castle at Mercues; visited prehistoric cave paintings at Lascaux II; saw the grape harvest and how wine is made; made chocolate chip cookies and pancakes with maple syrup - enjoyed by all.

I am having a really good time here, my French is improving everyday and that is what counts. I think I am going to have a full year of new and exciting experiences.

I hope all goes well in the County of Bruce.

Gosses Bises,  
Darlene Monkman

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