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Australia, 1966

Recalling first Rotary exchange

By PAUL ARMSTRONG
Rotary Club of Georgetown

The Rotary Club of Georgetown first became involved in the international group study exchange program in 1966, when it hosted a visiting team from Victoria Australia. Naturally, the club did its part by showing the guests what Georgetown had to offer. Many townspeople probably remember that first visit.

Once a visiting team has been accepted, each club in the district (Number 707) is

invited to submit nominations of businessmen or professional people between 25 and 35 years of age who would like to travel to a reciprocal country the following year.

I was nominated by the Georgetown Rotary along with another local fellow, Pat Dillon, to visit Australia's District 280, primarily in the Victoria area.

There were 60 non-Rotarians involved and I, along with six others, was selected to form the first team of

Group Study Exchange students from this district to travel to another country.

In 1967, young people in their 20's were not as worldly as those today, so we were quite nervous about embarking on this new venture. Since we formed the first team, we had no one to bounce ideas or experiences off and we were in fear and trepidation about doing the job properly.

The two-month period spent living with people in

another country, eating their food and sharing their lives for brief times made us understand that we are not all that different.

We learned to rise early in the morning, cram many activities into the day and night and still keep alert and interested. Although it was a pleasure, it was also a pressure, because everybody was trying to make their part interesting and exciting, but

we did get tired.

During our time there, we studied the educational system in brief at all levels, visited farms and stayed on some to see how they functioned. We also studied the government structure and listened to the policies of the respective parties.

We also shared in the social aspect by attending parties, cottaging with families and watching their well-

loved sports.

The experience certainly helped to broaden me. I learned more about people. I also had the chance to pay back some of my new-found friends who have visited me since my return.

Shortly after my return, I was proposed as a member of Rotary and have enjoyed that experience to work with my fellow members and assist the community in our projects.



Georgetown residents and Rotary Club members John McDonald and Paul Armstrong are among many people who have travelled to other countries sponsored by the Rotary to learn about other people's customs. Mr. McDonald has travelled to Israel while Mr. Armstrong has been to Australia.

Seven weeks in Israel 'wonderful, unique'

By JOHN McDONALD
Rotary Club of Georgetown

"Building goodwill and a better understanding between different people" is a purpose of the Rotary International's Group Study Exchange Program. I had the privilege of representing the Georgetown Rotary Club in April, 1976, on a study to Israel for a seven-week period.

This was my first trip overseas and was a wonderful and unique opportunity to learn about another culture and people.

Although the trip was designed to give group members an understanding of the receiving country, we also had a good deal of preparatory briefings in Canada before

departure. We were expected to make presentations on our own country, making it a true 'exchange' of information. Visits to various Ontario industries, Queen's Park and governmental agencies, helped to 'round out' our knowledge of Canada and Ontario.

Israel has to be one of the most desirous destinations of many people for many reasons. Its unique history, religions and Holy sites, political and military climate add to its mystique. I arrived at Lod airport with a thirst to learn about the country and left with a yearning to return some day.

The Rotary Exchange Program gives one an opportunity to live with the families of

the visited country. Traveling for seven weeks in human relations. Living with the family unit gives a valuable insight into the country that you cannot read about or purchase in a travel agency. Late night discussions with Israelis over a bottle of Carmel Oriental Wine, reading local news and editorials gave one a tremendous viewpoint.

Rotary fosters international understanding and our trip to Israel, I hope, exemplified this. The ongoing communication with friends in Israel, and the opportunity to share my experiences in slide presentations here in Canada have made me appreciate and acknowledge the Rotary Group Study Exchange Program.

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