



Edwina Bech, (right), from Caboolture, Australia, is a guest at the home of Maura Kirby, Elm Stouffville, and attending Sacred Heart High School at Newmarket. Edwina says she's slowly adjusting to life in Canada, even the weather. Although a Canadian citizen, she still considers Australia her home. —Jim Thomas

Student from 'down under' Australian tan faded on Stouffville arrival

By BRUCE STAPLEY

STOUFFVILLE — When 17-year-old Edwina Bech climbed aboard the airliner that would take her to Canada back in January, the temperature was 40 degrees Celsius.

The location was her home town of Caboolture near Brisbane, Australia.

When she arrived at Pearson International Airport, she stepped out into the bitter cold of a typical winter day in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. "It didn't take long for my tan to disappear," laughs the native Canadian, who has lived with her family in Australia since age three.

Having recently completed her Grade 12 in December, Edwina decided to take advantage of an opportunity to attend classes in Canada for the remainder of the school year, with an eye to enrolling in a Graphic Arts course at a Toronto college.

"I'm not really sure how long I'll be staying," says the pretty teen. "My immediate future didn't seem all that exciting, so I chose to come here. I've always wanted to travel."

Edwina had initially contacted Paul and Peggy Kirby, her Elm Road, Stouffville, hosts, enquiring if their daughter Maura could come and stay with her. At age 14, Mrs. Kirby felt Maura wasn't quite ready for such an adventure. Instead, she suggested Edwina come here. Mr. Kirby and Edwina's father have ties dating back to their high school days.

Since her arrival, Edwina has discovered there are more adjustments than just the weather. "Everything is a culture shock to me," she admits, "but I'm becoming accustomed to it now. It helps when you begin making friends."

Edwina and Maura travel by bus to Sacred Heart High School in Newmarket. In addition to sights around Toronto, she's also visited Niagara Falls. In May, she'll serve as a bridesmaid at her aunt's wedding in New Jersey.

Canada was completely unfamiliar to Edwina. She was a visitor here back in 1982, but only for six weeks.

Despite the change in climate, Edwina describes it as "more interesting" than Australia. "Here, you get to appreciate the changing seasons," she says.

The seventeen-year-old admits to confusion concerning her national allegiance. "I'm a Canadian citizen in a sense," she says. "It was a little like coming home. But now that I'm here, I still consider Australia as home."

Enquiries concerning Paul Hogan (Crocodile Dundee) and Olivia Newton-John cause Edwina to smile. "Many people don't seem to realize just how large Australia is," she says.

Yes, she misses her family. Just how much is indicated by a \$500 telephone bill the first month she was here. She also keeps in touch with her boyfriend, mostly by mail. She's received several letters in return.

The thing that's impressed her most is the quality and variety of food.

"I love Oreos and Reese's Pieces," she admits. "I still haven't tasted an egg roll, but my dad says they're great."

Edwina appreciates the number of TV channels here. Gasoline prices are a far cry from the 60 cents a litre she knew back home.

One thing surprises her — the tightly grouped houses with most looking exactly the same. "Homes in Australia are built much further apart," she explains. "There are no small lots and crowded subdivisions. And all the homes are different. Each house is built individually."

Edwina's hobbies include art and photography. Since arriving here, she's taken dozens of pictures. She's also purchased many new clothes.

"The shopping is awesome," she says.

As winter gives way to spring, Edwina's looking forward to regaining some of the tan she lost following her arrival here in January.

Her many new acquaintances are hoping they don't lose Edwina's friendship, that she'll remain in Stouffville, at least for a while. Caboolture's loss is our gain.

'Girl Next Door' Drummer to beat



Sixteen-year-old Nicki Wilson, Conc. 7, Whitechurch-Stouffville, is a member in the percussion section of the High School's Sr. Band. She also plays the drums with the Oakland Crusaders, North York. Nicki's a student in Grade 11 at SDSS. —Jim Thomas

By JIM THOMAS

WHITCHURCH — Sixteen-year-old Nicki Wilson, Conc. 7, Whitechurch-Stouffville, is a member in the percussion section of the High School Sr. Band.

Nicki's expertise in this area gives the Band a professional touch. She's also a member of the Oakland Crusaders, North York and played previously with the Ambassadors' Drum and Bugle Corps, Newmarket.

She's our 'Girl Next Door'. Nicki has always lived in the country and while she enjoys occasional visits to 'the big city', the rural area is 'home'.

Nicki's a student in Grade 11 at S.D.S.S. English is her favorite subject. Mr. Hodgson receives top marks as a favorite teacher.

Nicki's association with music began in public school where she played the flute. At the high school level, she switched to percussions. She's happy with the change.

Participation with both the Ambassadors and the Crusaders has allowed her an opportunity to travel. Competitions have been held in Madison, Wisconsin; Washington and Quebec City.

She attends Crusader practices once, sometimes twice a week.

"It's tiring," she says, "but worth it."

Nicki's also an accomplished soloist, a vocal student of Ann Simons four years. She's participated in the Newmarket Lions Music Festival.

Nicki has one brother, Nelson, 19. She's a member in the congregation of Baker Hill Baptist Church.

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