

Ballantrae is 'way up north' for French exchange student

By BRUCE STAPLEY
For Myriam Eluther, a summer holiday spent up north takes on a slightly different meaning.

Unless your favorite vacation spot is Ballantrae, the 15-year-old native of Guadeloupe in the French West Indies, is spending three weeks of this summer with Heather and Reid Andrews and their children Tracy and Michael.

The cultural exchange was arranged through a French company which is in the business of providing horizon-broadening experiences for French-speaking teens around the world.

Called *Mondes Nouveaux*, the company has a North American office in Florida, which arranged for Myriam's excursion.

'Well-organized'

"They are very well-organized," Heather states, claiming her house guest has provided her family a great deal of joy.

"They send French-speaking teens to Canada, the United States and Great Britain so they can practise their English and experience family life in a different cultural setting."

Myriam is one of 15 who made the trip from Guadeloupe. They are spread over Uxbridge, Scarborough, Bramalea, Blackstock and Port Perry as well as Ballantrae.

The group is accompanied by a teacher from their home country, who will stay in Toronto and act as a liaison if needed. Linda Winder of Uxbridge is the Canadian coordinator for the teens.

Myriam, who is in the equivalent of Grade 11 back home, is by now an experienced traveller, having made a similar trip to England last summer. The daughter of a psychologist, she hopes to be a lawyer. The study of different languages is stressed in her school system.

And while she says she is comfortable with her hosts, she admits to having been slightly bewildered upon her arrival in Canada.

Sightseeing tours

"It was a strange feeling to come to the airport and look at all those strange faces, and wonder who was going to take me home."

And having experienced a long stopover in Miami that saw her day of travel go from 9 a.m. to midnight, she was happy to bed down for the night.

But she quickly regained her energy, and has been seeing all the sights from Day One.

"We went to the CN Tower, the Eaton Centre and the St. Lawrence Market," Heather reviews. "And we did a long walking tour of Toronto, complete with a visit to City Hall."

Myriam accompanied 4-H club members Tracy and Christine Dube to the 4-H Club judging competition at the Markham Fairgrounds, to get a taste of Ontario farm lifestyle.

Myriam's stay will include a visit to the Ontario Science Centre, Black Creek Pioneer Village, Niagara Falls and maybe a trip to Ottawa and Montreal.

"I will be interested to visit a French-speaking city," Myriam says.

Myriam admits it has been a bit of a strain to keep up in English.

"But I've been studying English at school for five years. I'm comfortable, as long as people speak slowly."

Heather says Myriam is very good at picking things up in English.

Understood movie

"We speak very little French," she says. "But we won't help her unless we have to."

She adds that Myriam went with the family to see the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, and while she didn't understand all the words, she was able to follow the storyline.

"I can usually understand the English programs on television," Myriam says. And she was disappointed with the French programs on the air here.

Heather has been more than impressed with Myriam's ability to fit in with Tracy and her friends.

"I was afraid she might be a little shy at first, but Myriam is friendly and outgoing, and she relates well with her peers here."

Myriam has taken particular interest in adding to her record and tape collection since she has been here.

Better prices

"It is very much the same music here, and the prices are better for records and tapes."

Myriam says. She has purchased records by George Michael, Prince and other favorites.

Myriam has felt right at home with the hot weather we've experienced.

"It's 30 to 35 degrees in Guadeloupe this time of year." But she hopes she won't see the hurricanes here that sometimes hit her homeland around this time.

Myriam claims her Ballantrae

experience has been unforgettable, and appreciates the Andrews putting her up. Heather insists it has been a mutual pleasure.

"She's been good company."



Myriam Eluther of Guadeloupe (right) and Heather Andrews pose in front of the Andrews' home in Ballantrae. The Andrews family is hosting Myriam on a cultural exchange. **BRUCE STAPLEY**

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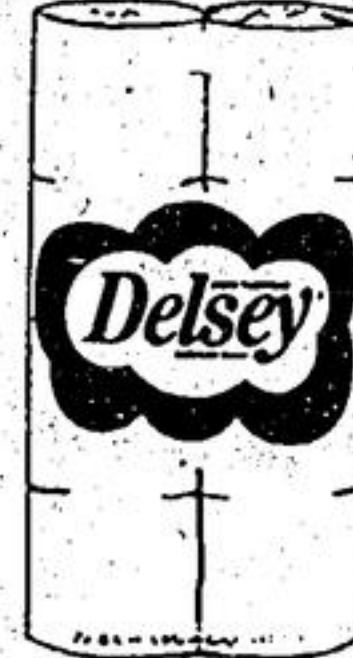

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