



Steven - needs to apologise!

Steven Wenzel reporting for **Boonah** Rotary Club, Australia

Dateline: - August, 2004

Location: - **Kitee** Rotary Club, Finland

Ystävällinen Terveisin, (Friendly greetings (used in letter writing))

Right off the start I realise that I need to apologise yet again for the lateness of my reports, this stems not so much from a desire not to write them but rather a complete disconnection with how much time has actually passed. (*That sometimes happens, it's called "Exchangeitis", it's where time ceases to have any formal meaning. Ed.*) And boy how time has flown. It was just this weekend while I was at a Rotary district camp that I was informed that I had been here almost 8 months and would only be here for less than four. (*I hope they broke that to you gently. Ed.*) It's then that it really hit me that my year is fast approaching its end and it still feels like it has only just begun, and to be honest that was probably one of the saddest moments I have had since arriving here. I also realised that I haven't written a report for at least the last couple of months and promptly decided to set about writing one. (*Well, I for one thank you for that, for, without reports, the Hopping Mag would cease to be. Ed.*) It's now a few weeks later and I am still promptly writing this report, (*I'm glad that you said promptly, somehow I was thinking of a different word. Ed.*) however I guarantee that it will one day be written.

Since the last report, I have both finished my summer holidays and started going back to school (the two didn't quite coincide thanks to a visit from Pete, thanks Pete), as well as taking numerous trips to different parts of Finland. I have attended a Finnish folk festival, a rock festival and surprisingly even an orthodox religious festival (as a volunteer). I have had a visit from both Fabian and Pete, both of which were great. During Fabian's visit I managed to see a lot more of Helsinki

than I had done before as well as visiting a few other cities and having a great look around; and during Peters visit I was able to see more of the area around me, as well as visit Estonia, a fascinating little country, which while being similar to Finland in some ways, manages to be completely different. I also had the opportunity to try my first smoke sauna (the original version of the Finnish sauna, where you come out with more dirt on you than when you went in). Of course, perhaps the greatest part of their visits for me was just to be able to see some of the faces from home.

Another of the trips I made which is definitely worth mentioning was the school fishing trip to Lapland (the north end Finland). Although part of only a small group from school I had a great time, Fishing in a Norwegian Fjord, a lake on the northern Tunturi of Lapland (the closest it gets to big hills in Finland) and as the culmination of the trip almost 24 solid hours of solid fly fishing in Tenjoki the largest salmon river in Europe (apparently). As well as a lot of fishing, I also did a little hiking, saw a little of Finnmark (the area north of Finland which was inhabited by a large number of Finns), saw a lot of reindeer, walked about a kilometre naked down a very cold river in the hope to find a big lake (which I did) (the kilometre didn't count the little side trip to chase reindeer) and spent a few hours picking cloudberries. All in all it was another great trip, and I even got to see some telephone booths in Norway, a real rarity after having lived in Finland for so long.

During my holidays I also spent some time at my host families summer cottage (as is almost mandatory in Finland), did a little strawberry picking (about a weeks worth), spent some time with friends, and of course met some new ones and all in all probably spent about 3 weeks at home out of the longest summer holiday I've been on since starting school (and of those three weeks, only one was actual "not doing anything unusual" holiday).

After summer holidays, I reluctantly started school again, and have kept myself pretty busy. I attended a district camp, and while

there managed to meet all the newbie exchange students, see the only semi poisonous snake in Finland (It's tiny and only dangerous to babies and the elderly), do the normal sort of Rotary activities, talk to pepper-pot ladies while in the middle of a nuddy run to the nearest lake from the sauna (with my towel in my hand), get three people sitting on my shoulders in a human tower, and had yoghurt eaten off my belly in a slightly twisted game of truth or dare (minus the truth). All in all it was yet another great Rotary organised event.

I also attended the grand finals for the Finnish baseball (and managed to get my mug on Finnish national TV, all my friends watching the game noticed the only curly haired guy in the crowd) and have spent a fair amount of time doing normal Finnish stuff with friends. All in all, life is good here. Hope everyone and everything is well back in Australia. See you in a few months.

Terveydeksi

Steve

P.S. The weather man has said that we might get the first snow down here tomorrow, which will be a nice change from the drizzling rain. I guess I had better be off and go rake some more perkele leaves. Gregor-Patrick – Likes to Eat!



Gregor-Patrick Heine
reporting for **Wiener Nuestadt Rotary Club, Austria**
Dateline: - October, 2004
Location: - **Surfers Paradise Rotary Club, Australia**

BIRTHDAY Friday

(15.10.2004)

This morning when I woke up was somehow special. (*I know how you feel, every day I wake up, I know it's something special. Ed.*) Knowing to turn seventeen made me feel good and made me enjoy the day. I am not sure if it was a special day or if my birthday made it

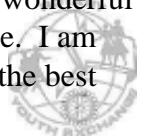
special. (*I'd try for both, birthdays are really special. Ed.*) Anyway, I loved this day and being 17 feels good, much better than 16 especially when you had such a wonderful exhilarating birthday as I had.

The first and biggest surprise of the day was the present of Suzanne. I would not have expected such a great gift. I gave Suzanne a big hug and then I had a wonderful breakfast with all the things I love to eat. And before I left for school my parents rang me and sang: "Happy birthday to you!" what made me cry. It was so wonderful as well as heartbreaking to me. I love my parents.

At school everybody was very kind to me. I wore a badge, given to me by Roger which says: "Tuned To Perfection" what made all of my mates well aware of the fact that it was my birthday. Besides this badge caused some misunderstandings because some people surprisingly read "Turned To Protection". However, I am not a bodyguard but I enjoyed the day at school with everybody congratulating me. I even scored a try in Football Studies. That was tremendous! (*Congratulations! Ed.*)

After school Anne picked me up and she took me to her place, where we celebrated my birthday with a self-made chocolate cake from Anne and a lovely birthday song. This week was pretty soon after Roger's operation on his back. Those days he was improving but he still did not have to do any work. After the cake and the song Roger and Anne gave me wonderful birthday present, which turned out to be my first singlet. Now Anne and I had to do some work for English which I did not mind at all. She is the best English teacher I have ever had in my whole live! It is a pleasure to be taught by her and I really enjoy it! (Besides she helped me to interpret the old song "Dance into the fire" what was like an eye-opener to me).

Anne took me back home and when I had waved goodbye I went inside where wonderful delicious prawns were waiting for me. I am likely to say that these prawns were the best



one I have ever had. How it turned out, we did not have enough time to finish our five star dinner because we wanted to go to the Casino show, where I was allowed to invite Eva. When we picked her up she gave me very good-looking board shorts, what I found very kind of her. I got dressed up (like a peacock), we picked up Eva and then we were in the Casino.

How lucky I was at all! The Casino show was great. It had a lot of dances, songs and wonderful costumes as beautiful as they possibly could be. The only thing which it did not have was a storyline or something near to it. It simply was colorful but for no reason. Anyway, I really enjoyed it a lot I took a lot of photos and heaps of photos were taken of me.

After having played Keno and not winning much (3\$ which we bought another Keno and then two pieces of chocolate, each for 0,5\$ because we only won 1\$) we went back home where I ate up all the prawns, not leaving one behind. *(After watching Gregor eat, I can understand that! Ed.)*

Most surprisingly a very old friend of mine rang me and said "Happy birthday to you!" His name is "Michale Kajdosci" and he was born five days after me, so we know each other for quite a long time now. And then my parents called me again and we had a long, long conversation about everything going on in Austria and Australia.

Before I went to bed I took another picture of mine, wearing my new bardies and my singlet. It was a great birthday. Too pity I have it only once a year.

One of the probably most important and valuable birthday presents have ever been given to me is the realisation of being me. I am I and nobody else. I am neither my father nor my mother, nor is my father me. I am an individual responsible for every single step I make. When you know it, it is as simple as pie. – Thanks Jocelyn!

"Life is what you make out of it," an old lady told me once when I met her on the street "if

you want to be an old grumpy man it is up to you" and it is true. *(That's a good life lesson to learn. Ed.)*

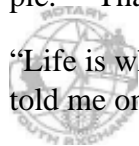
Another important thing I learned is: "People say that one will become happy if one does what one loves but I don't think so. It is not that important to do what you love. The trick is that you love everything you do. Then you are happy. – But how do you do it? – It is just a mental thing. It depends on what you do with it in your head (brain). You can either hate everything you do or you can love everything. It is just the way you put it (and what you make out of it). (It is just a matter of your attitude.) – Thanks dragon slayer lady! www.dragonslayer.com.au

SAILING & SNOREKLING - JOS & AL

When Jos and Al picked me up I had to go back home quickly to grab Scott's wet-suit because I would need it, as Jos said.

On this very day, Jos took me to a snorkelling equipment shop, where we bought booties. Actually she payed for them and I learned one of the probably most important things - when it comes to money, friendship is more important - this is contrary to the Austrian saying: "When money starts friendships ends - but this saying describes not real friends. It is about those people who just put you down, if you see what I mean.

After we bought the booties, we went to the marina, went on bard and motored along the Broadwater where we finally anchored in front of an island with a small hut on it. Jocelyn asked me if I were afraid of spiders, because I would have to sleep in the hut. I asked her, if there really were spiders. She simply replied not in the bed, the snakes have eaten them all. *(Ha, Ha, Ha, what a great way to start an adventure! Ed.)* Fortunately I did not have to sleep in the bird watching hut. When the day began to fail we got out the candles and the matches to be prepared for the nightfall. By using candles we saved valuable energy. Al lighted the Barbie and started preparing a wonderful meal for all of us, which was not too easy because the wind blew strongly. And



after we had had dinner he lay down to rest for a while, when Jos and I started a very interesting deep-going conversation, hearing the noise of Al's snoring. (He saw down a hundred trees.) I slept very well that night and we returned to the marina in the morning to go snorkelling. It was wonderful. We fed the fish with bread, so that they come closer to us. It was just wonderful. It was as wonderful as one can always see it in those documentaries on TV.

After having seen all the fish and feeling freezing cold (*Now, weren't you glad that Jos suggested the wet suit, otherwise you really would have been cold! Ed.*) we went back to the marina, had a burger for lunch and went back home. I thanked Jos gladly for everything and waved them good-bye. Funnily I forgot to take my key with me, so I could not go inside and had to wait in the backyard until Stuart and Suzanne arrived. (*Another valuable life lesson there! Ed.*)

TOUCH (Friday 22.Oct.2004)

We played beach touch in the sports hall at school and I scored a tremendous try. It was unbelievable! Actually this was the first time I really played well. I got the ball, pretended to pass it, passed one opponent, stepped the second one with a pretended move to the right and dodged the third one diving toward the try-line and scoring the most exhilarating try of my life. (*Excellent! Ed.*)

INDY (Sunday 24.Oct.2004)

What a day! I am still rocking. It is unbelievable what is happening at the Indy. If you have not seen it you will not believe it. To make it understandable easily here is some general information. Plainly Surfers Paradise is the centre of the Gold Coast the pulsating heart of the world's most terrific tourism regions. It is the metropolis. Everything moves and flows, nothing seems to take a rest ever. It does not matter when you go there tourists will be always around you passing by in a hurry. It is a wonderland for every traveller, stranger or tourist; it is a magic meeting place for locals and above all it is an

Eldorado for party people. This city is 100 per cent pure entertainment. And paying visitors are most welcome. (But surprisingly it has the worst public traffic system I have ever seen!) Normally it is like every other city. Nice clean and safe roads, calm parks to hide and relax, delightful sandy beaches for any water activities, blue sky, high nice and tidy skyscrapers with sensible people living in them and above all this city has the "Indy".

When we talk about swear words we often call them "four letter words" (and I am not giving any examples.) Funnily enough it is the case that "Indy" has four letters and it occurs to be the bane of those people living in Surfers. Getting worse traffic jams over a one moth period makes some of them grumble and the may be likely to say: "Damn Indy!"

It may sound very harsh and negative what has been written down here. Anyway I had a real good time at the Indy and I just wanted to bring all my thoughts to paper. Now to the summary of my day at the Indy: Getting up at 8 o'clock in the morning was rather hard than easy to me especially when I went to bed lately last night. After having a nice breakfast we left the house and picked up Eva to go to the Indy.

Being dropped as near as possible to the racing track we had still to walk for more than fifteen minutes to see the racing road. Approaching the track we made up our minds about going to the beach on such a hot day. A few clouds were at the sky but the waves were very good and the water crystal clear. To me it was a pleasure to go for a swim using my new goggles. Actually I have seen a few fish. It enormously was surprising to see the fish underwater where one would not expect them that near to the shore. After going for a swim twice and having already enjoyed several body surfs and dives Eva and I decided to head towards Surfers and make a "Pit Stop" at Hungry Jacks.

On the way to Surfers, thinking about the invitation we have got from duty, a friend of Suzanne, I met some friends from school



(Josh, Losbian, Bondi and Aaden). All of them are year twelve students and they are in my Football Studies class. Finally I have been accepted by them a few days ago, making the Indy even more interesting for. Josh told me his parents owed a flat in Surfers, pointing at the high raiser directly in front of me and explaining how he got in for free. We had a very amusing and good chat until they started to go home (and I don't mean the flat in Surfers).

Now being back on the track we went to the fast food restaurant and straight after to Duty's place in "Elchorn Street" called "The Chateau" (4th floor, room 403).

Entering this room was as if falling into the rabbit hole like Alice, not knowing how deep it goes. Approximately 10 people were there and most importantly a bountiful table with turkey breast, bread, biscuits, fruit-bread, salad, marmalade and so further and so on. (*Ahhhh, Gregor in his element, surrounded by nice food! Ed.*) Looking out of the window directly at the racing track was extremely exhilarating for me. Rather quickly I started mixing with people talking about the Indy and things of my liking.

We arrived there just in the nick of time to see the start of the Indy and get involved in the sweep. I payed 2A\$ and picked a ticked of Norman, who celebrated his 72 birthday on this day. 72 may sound very old, but he looks like 45. There is no trace of age in his face. He is an enormously interesting person, born in England, living in New Zealand and making holidays on the Gold Coast with his girl friend Duty, who is the owner of the unit and invited us. And the most terrific thing about him is that he is one of the scarce very English gentlemen. He said to me: "It doesn't matter how old you are, you'll always feel the same. You will look for girls and you will make love to girls." And: "It is all about the sport, not the winning." It was most interesting talking to him and I wished the race would never end but time passed by quicker than expected and Eva and I had to go.



This was not the end of the fun at all. We made our way through Surfers and it was like a state of emergency to me. Girls were getting nude on the balconies, people being tipsy yelling, worker removing the Indy racetrack and two guys stealing the big Indy track map. (*Sounds more like a normal day at Surfers. Ed.*)

We headed towards Southport and were picked up finally. When I was back at home I saw a gecko in the kitchen as a last highlight of the day.

RUGBY UNION (Friday 29.10.04)

This Friday was not just a normal school day; it was the start of manhood for me. On this day we were going to play rugby union at school in Football Studies and I admit that I was a little nervous. I am not just going to start telling you the story what has happened, I will tell you about first thoughts about ruby.

I believed rugby is a rude, brutal and bad game, which ought to be forbidden because of the risk of getting hurt. But now I think differently! Rugby is the sport of gentlemen. (*You'll have to explain that one to me at some stage! Ed.*)

During morning tea we got together to be prepared for the next period to play rugby. I have become very friendly with some year 12 students in my Footy class. Josh took along a pair of shorts and shoes for me, and Aaden shoulder pads. I bought a mouthguard two days ago, which I moulded the day before with Josh in the Home-Economics building, using the water boiler to make the rubber flabby.

I put everything on and soon we were on the field and the game started. Proud I was to be part of Aaden's team and to be accepted by the others. The shoulder pads made me feel so good. I looked stronger and they gave me the feeling of being invincible. My team won the game 32 to 15 and I got the ball about 10 times. I always caught it and never dropped it. I got tripped once and pushed down once. I was the winger and did quite a good job. I even earned Joshy's respect, who is a

professional rugby and touch player. I was involved into a maul and nearly every scorn. I got a lot of passes and passed the ball on a lot.

In other words: It was the most exhilarating game I have ever played.

And after school I bought my own snorkelling gear including snorkel, mask, fins and a knife if I get caught in a fishing line or something else. (*I won't ask! Ed.*)

Like I said – it was the begin of manhood!

SAILING (Saturday 30.10.04)

This sailing day could have been a swimming day. I went sailing with some mates from school and we hired those small boats at the Runaway Bay Marina Junior Training Facility. Only two people were able to sit in that boat and life jacket and helmet were compulsory. And I was very luck to wear a helmet in the end. (*That's strange, most people I know wear the helmet on their head. Ed.*)

I sailed with Zowie, a girl in my Marine Studies class, who handles sailing boats pretty well. We were laughing at those who fell into the water and I felt pride. However, things changed when Zowie said: "Have a go with the stirring!" And I replied: "Are you sure you want me to do that?" After changing places I was the skipper and it took only 3 minutes until we tilted. Later on someone asked me how often I joined the fish, I was simply replying: "I have given up counting at 37!"

Zowie and I did not have a lot of time to talk at all. The brakes between falling into the water were to short. :) Soon I said: "It is your turn now! I don't want to swim once more." Anyway it was a wonderful, wet and cold experience which was very much fun and I really enjoyed.

JACARANDA FESTIVAL IN GRAFTON

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 4TH

8.45am - 10.45am Susan Island - walk in the rainforest with Juergen -

Ranger. Picture of tree, climbing on tree.

11.00am - 1.00pm Market Square, Main Street, Jacaranda activities – Kraoke & Buddah

1.00pm - 3.00pm Assemble outside Saraton theatre for transport to Ten Pin Bowling. Scored a Strike twice

3.00pm - Peter Robinson to pick up from Bowling, Dinner & evening at the Robinsons', swimming in pool. Meet first time Casey

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 5TH

9.30am - Depart Civic Centre for a coach tour of the Lower Clarence (point of view - uninteresting - long trip, nothing to see) (*I hope you change you mind about that before you go on Safari! Ed.*)

12 noon - Lunch courtesy Yamba Rotary Club, Yamba Bowling Club.

2pm - Yamba main beach, swim and play with footie.

4.30pm - Arrive back in Grafton for collection by host families Civic Centre

6.00pm - Grafton TAFE, Dinner and bush dance, Grafton Midday Rotary First time whip - Casey's father.

10.00pm - Students collected by host families

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6th

Morning - Free to spend with hosts or enjoying Grafton hospitality I spent all morning at Casey's cracking the whip, having fun, talking, swimming and enjoying myself. (Daniel & Casey)

12.30pm - Arrive Grafton Rotary Club Shed for lunch

1.30pm - Students to decorate float ready for procession

2.30pm - Host collect students at Rotary shed. Students need to go home

- and change for procession.
Blazers compulsory
- 4.00pm - Return to Rotary shed site to assemble for parade
- 4.30pm - Travel on the float to marshalling area
- Requirements...For parade...Blazers, neatly dressed, water bottle, big smiles and loud voices
- 5.00pm - Parade commences
- 6.15pm - Float returns to shed to dismantle float
- 7.00pm - Barbecue dinner arranged by Grafton Rotary Club South Grafton Bowling Club.
- Students will give their "Country of Origin" concert. (Kaktus)
- 10.00pm - Students to be collected by hosts

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 7th

- 10.30am - Assemble at Corcoran Park. Some watercraft may be available for being dragged behind in a biscuit. A buffet lunch will be provided.
- 2.30pm - Conclusion of activities. Host families to collect students for preparation to depart Grafton.

BETTI (13th Nov, Saturday)

It was a really wonderful day on the beach with a girl called Bettina. She is actually from Austria and has been living here for 1.5 years. We enjoyed ourselves on the beach and in the evening we watched the movie "The Forgotten" in the cinema.

All in all a wonderful day and the best is, she really can massage very well. My back feels a lot better now.

ZOWIE & SNORKELLING (14th Nov Sunday)

That day I went snorkelling with two of my mates (Zowie and Julian (a German)) to the Spit. It was a bright and shiny day. No clouds

- blue sky and sunshine. The water was wonderfully clear. It was a pleasure to watch all these fishes.

Once more I felt like a marine biologist, observing sea-life, like these people do it in those documentaries. By being in the water for more than an hour I suffered from hypothermia in the end and this was not a lovely experience. I was shaking with cold and leaned on the hot car to regain my warmth.

Anyway, I enjoyed it. I saw a lot of colourful fish, reflecting the sunlight in the most wonderful and brightest colours one can imagine. Swimming with the fish is fascinating and in my opinion better than surfing.

After our adventure we were dropped at the Main Beach by Suzanne, where we stayed for quite a while, swimming in the sea, body surfing and chatting. Then we went to Australia Fair to watch a movie but we were too late and I wanted to catch the 2 o'clock bus home. So we went to the Enclosure in the Broadwater near the shopping centre and observed the business of people enjoying their selves by having a good Barbie.

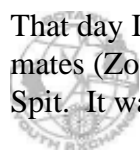
I caught the bus home, waved goodbye to them and was looking forward to meet Eva for our weekly chat at her place. You cannot imagine how good it feels when you can talk to someone in your mother tongue about all these things of your interest and concern.

I just loved it. And around 6 o'clock I was back home.

FORMAL (Wednesday, Nov 17th)

It was great. All my friends of year 12 were there, Aaden, Ana, Bodie, Richard, Josh, Luke, Zane, Kate, Carlos and many more. I had such a great time. I cannot describe it with a thousand words.

We shook, danced, jumped, laughed, yelled, sang, ate, looked, watched, moved, brake danced, made jokes and above all this, we enjoyed ourselves and especially I did, as I have never done it before! If I had to describe



it with one word I would just simply say: "My Formal!" I am so happy that I have been there. Those memories will last forever!

Special thanks to Adden: He has really made me feel accepted and taught me a lot of things. He is a real friend. He looked after me and I have learned from him how to deal with life and how to make it be wonderful and enjoyable and also how to deal with people. Thank you Aaden!

And Ana: Thank you too! You have really made me enjoy the formal. When I said to him: "Look at this guy, he just stands there doing nothing," he replied: "He is not as gifted as we are!" And he is right. We are very gifted, especially I am by having the pride, the privilege, the honour, no, the pleasure to have met Aaden, Ana and the rest of these wonderful people; for being at the Gold Coast and being in Australia.

I am very thankful! And happy!

Gregor Patrick



Sarah – Don't cry for me!

Sarah Matheson reporting for **Surfers Paradise Central Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - October, 2004

Location: - **Duderstadt/ Eichsfeld Rotary Club,**

Germany

Well October was definitely a month to remember; what with my parents here, missing trains because of drainpipes, changing host families, playing Europareise nearly everyday and seeing how pretty Autumn really is here in Germany!

First of all I have to mention the "saying goodbye to my parents" story. The night before my parents flew out we went and saw the movie "Terminal". Well my dad shed a few tears in the movie – I said to him after the movie that I bet he doesn't even cry at the airport the next day when he says goodbye to me! And I was right... he didn't cry! He cried

in the movie "Terminal" but didn't cry in the actual terminal when he said goodbye to me! Mum went on to tell me that he shed a tear or two later but still... so yeh that was that.

Ok so the second story. There was a car accident one morning on the way to school so the traffic was fairly built up and my host dad wasn't able to drive the normal weg (way) to the Bahnhof (train station). Therefore my host dad had to take another weg so I could get to the Bahnhof. He said I still had plenty of time and that I wasn't going to miss my train because there was a special *Unterführung* (underpass) I could take to get to the train station quicker. Well let's just say there wasn't! (*Maybe the underpass had gone underground! Ed.*) As it turned out he dropped me off at a drainpipe not an *Unterführung*! It was cold, dark and raining and I seriously had no bock (no goat - couldn't be bothered) (*OK – I just have to ask – what's special about having a goat with you when it's raining. Most people I know would prefer a coat, as would I, especially if it's raining. Ed.*) for something like this that time of the morning! I was not a happy little Vegemite! So there was no *Unterführung* and if I wanted to catch my train on time I was going to have to walk across the tracks (about 4 or 5 of them). I walked across the tracks (strictly forbidden as I'm sure you know – it was dark though so no-one saw me thankfully!) and then ended up missing my train anyway! I waited for like an hour for the next train and got sick in the mean time... way to be a drainpipe, drainpipe!

Changing host families this month made me realise how much luggage I actually have. I don't know how I'm going to bring it all back (or not bring it all back it) to Aussie in January what with being allowed nur (only – the German word sounds better than the English equivalent – so I gotta use it!) 20kg in our Koffers (suitcases)! Every kilo over is going to cost an extra 40€!! So I think I'd better do some smart packing as well as schick (send) a few things home by post before I leave. (*Ah – the secret of a good ending to an exchange emerges – send stuff home by the cheapest post*

available. Once a month is great – Address it to yourself - mark it personal, only to be opened by you, and post it off. When you get home, you will have a nice collection of parcels awaiting your presence. You'll have fun "re-discovering" all the magical things they contain, and better still, you'll still have one or three parcels arrive after you get home. Ed.)

You know we actually use quite a number of German words in the English language, zum Beispiel (for example);

- Kaputt (when something is broken or when someone is feeling exhausted!)
- Beer Garden (self-explanatory)
- Fest (eg Beer Fest – yes most things revolve around Beer in Germany)
- Gesundheit (Bless You!)
- Hinterland
- Kindergarten
- Rucksack (Backpack)
- Schnapps (spirits – shots!)
- Zig Zag (comes from Zickzack)

So there you go... I'm sure you didn't even realise you knew a few German words yourself! (There are heaps more but I thought I would share just a few)

I must admit I'm already thinking about the fact that I'm leaving Germany (my second home), in less than two and a half months – I've definitely been having mixed emotions the past few weeks and I think a good way to describe the feelings I've been having is to look at it this way; I've been away from home for nearly a year – and therefore perhaps, to some extent, have forgotten or lost the feel of home and the atmosphere and so I have somewhat stagnant memories. Because everything is the way I want it to be here and because I know this life I'm living at the moment so well I don't want to leave it. I have experienced so much this year that most

people other than exchange students can barely even begin to understand. However I realise when I get back things will start falling into place, things will be new, and my life after my year on exchange will continue. One thing I do know - my experiences this year have shaped who I now am...

Sarah



Belinda - Loving Austria!

Belinda Booth reporting for **Jimboomba Rotary Club, Australia**
 Dateline: - November, 2004
 Location: - **Liezen Rotary Club, Austria**

It has started SNOWING!! It was so cool to wake up and see that everything was white! My host brother, sister and I go sledding to the bus stop every morning. It's such fun, but COLD! It has been between 5 and minus 10 degrees and it's getting colder!

I rode a horse in the snow for the first time. It was a great experience! My host sister and I go riding often as we have four horses on our little farm!

My highlight from this month would be my trip to London. I flew to London to visit family and go sight seeing. I stayed with a cousin, Kathryn, whom I hadn't seen for 12 years! I was in London for 5 days and loved it. It is full of history and amazing architecture! I also saw the musical Fame, which was fantastic! The whole time I was in London it didn't rain! (*Did you submit that for a record to the Guinness Book Of Records?* Ed.)

After Christmas I am flying to Sweden to stay with Lisa who was my host sister in 2002 when she was on her exchange to Australia. I am SO looking forward to going to Sweden and to seeing Lisa again. After Sweden I might go to Prague and after that to Germany with some exchange students. Next weekend is our Rotary camp in Salzburg.

There is so much to do in the last month of this wonderful exchange! (Loving Austria!!)

Belinda

Eva - tooooooo fast!

Eva Müller reporting for **Klagenfurt Rotary Club, Austria**

Dateline: - November, 2004

Location: - Southport North Rotary Club, Australia



Hey Everyone!!!!

The time is running... tooooooo fast!!!! (It does seem like that at times. Ed.)

The first weekend in November was the best one ever. We went to Grafton to the Jacaranda festival. It was soo good to meet all the exchange students again and I really enjoyed the four days. We did some really cool things. (I bet you really blossomed. Ed.)

On Thursday we went to Susan Island. It was really hot in the rainforest.

We saw some nice Jacaranda trees and other plants. (Only Nice! Hurmph! Ed.) After that we had about two hours to go into the town of Grafton and had a look around.

Charlotte, Veronique, Jana, Patrick and I went shopping and we all bought the same hat. This is now our Rotary hat. Then we went around and had a look at the markets. After that we met each other again and went to ten-pin bowling.

After that we went to the family Robinson's house and had a swim and dinner.

It was great fun. On Friday it was another exciting day. We went on a coach tour to Yamba and we had lunch at the Rotary club. After that we went home again and got ready for bush dancing at the Rotary club in Grafton. On Saturday we were able to sleep longer and we met each other to decorate our float for the festival. We put balloons, flags and bow ties on the float.

We had to wear our blazers and at 4.30pm we travelled on the float to a marshalling area. We were waving with our flags and I always screamed really loud... "AUSTRIA".

At night we went to a Grafton Rotary club dinner with a concert at the end.

On Sunday we went to the river in Grafton and we were able towed behind a boat in a biscuit. After the great week we went on our 7-hour bus trip back home. It was a really good week and I want to thank all these people who organized the week for us. Thank you very much.

The following week wasn't very exciting. I still had school and I had to write two exams. I chose English and Drama. I went to a party on Friday.

It was a lot of fun. I really love partys... ;-)

On the 24th of November was my 17th Birthday. I and two friends from school went to the beach at seven in the morning. Then we ate breakfast in the Southport Surf Club with my drama class from school. After that I went back to school and I got five different kind of cakes. I felt really sick afterwards but I enjoyed it. (No wonder you felt so sick! Ed.) Then I went home and my host mum's parents came to say happy birthday. It was really nice. After that I went to my weekly Rotary meeting. I got a big Birthday cake and everyone sang happy birthday to me which was really nice. On the next day, my host parents Adelle and Wayne, my host brother Sam, my first host family Jeny and Damien and Gregor, went to Draculas to celebrate my birthday. We went through a few scary corridors and boarded a train that took us into the restaurant and there we saw a show. The show was really good and was about 2 hours long. I also really enjoyed our dinner. Thursday was my last school day and I'm happy that I'm on holidays now. I mean I like school but holidays are better. (No - your kidding me - Holidays better than school! Ed.)



I went to another party on Friday to celebrate my B'day with some friends from school. We had a lot of fun and all of them were soooo nice.

I'm sooooo happy that I'm able to be here on the Gold Coast on a Rotary exchange. I enjoy every single minute and I love everything. Thank you soooooooooo much!!

Eva



Meeri - suddenly I couldn't stop!

Meeri Maksniemi reporting for **Vihiti Rotary Club, Finland**

Dateline: - November, 2004

Location: - Maclean Rotary Club, Australia

Hello everyone!

How is it going Down Under? I was just reading physics and suddenly I couldn't stop thinking about my year in Australia. (*I don't know how that relates to Physics, but we are pleased that you thought of us. Ed.*) Well, actually I think about my exchange year every day (as weird as it may sound). (*Why should that sound weird, you have a life changing experience that would not have happened if you hadn't come over on exchange. Ed.*)

Really, there hasn't gone a day that I hadn't thought about it! And it's been already over a year since I got back home. Even some little thing might remind me of something over there.

Well, how is everyone going in Maclean? Have you hosted a new exchange student since I left? Rebecca Bell (the exchange student from Grafton who stayed with my family for 6 months) is back in Australia now and four of my friends are over there with her right now. One of them is working there (Laura), two of them (Päivikki and Minttu) are there for a holiday (they are coming home in a few weeks) and Tiia (who left a week ago) is going to visit her relatives after she has spend some time with the three other girls. I'm so jealous to them, because I'd like to be there too! But

school comes first and I have to finish it before I have any chances to come back. (*If you do, I know there are a lot of people who will like that! Ed.*)

I've been really busy for a long time now (well, actually all the time, even on holidays I've had all sorts of things going on...) we have exams at the moment, I had history yesterday and on Monday I have Finnish (6-hours) and on Tuesday I have physics (only 2,5 hours). The on Friday we celebrate our national day at school and have some program at school. There's going to be singing, dancing and all sorts of things. My boyfriend Joonas (we've been going out for a year now) (*Cool. Ed.*) is going to sing, "Imagine" (the Beatles) and I'm going to accompany him by piano.

I had one of my final exams on German about a month ago and we got our final results last week. The rating is L, E, M, C, B, A, I. L is the best. I got an E, which I'm really happy for! I'll have my final exams in English, Finnish, Physics, Religion, Swedish and Geographic in April-May. My graduation party is in early June. (*We know that you'll do well! Ed.*)

Everyone in my family is well and they all send you greetings. We just moved to a new house about 4 months ago and we're loving it! We didn't build our own house (like we were planning) because we found a new, really nice house just near our old house. So we sold our block of land, threw away the drawings of an architect and bought this house. It was a lot wiser to buy a house that had already been build than a block of land that we would've had to build on. (Building a house in Finland is not very easy and it takes a lot of time. All the heating systems and thick walls, snow etc.) Well, we are all very happy now. We are hosting an exchange student from Australia next year after my graduation, which we are all very excited for! Two friends from my school are in Australia at the moment on an exchange. Mikko (boy) is in Adelaide and Linda (a girl) is up somewhere near the Great Barrier Reef so there are a lot of my friends in

Australia from my town at the moment. And an Aussie friend of mine, Adam, (*Ahhhh, Adam Zaniewski is coming to town. Ed.*) is coming to visit me here in Finland next week. I'm so happy to see him for a long time! He's doing an "around-the-world-tour" and he is in Egypt at the moment. He'll be in Finland for a week and then he heads up for new adventures.

What else... Well, a lot has happened to me in this time... When I got back it was really hard for me to settle back into my old life. It felt like I didn't belong here anymore. Everything was good in my family but with my friends everything had changed. So what happened, was that the friends I used to hang out with I don't anymore, excluding two of them. They had problems with me being so different and not wanting to be the Meeri I was before I left. Well, that wasn't fine with me that they wanted me to change so we sort of grew apart. But I'm a lot happier now. I have "new" good friends now and I couldn't be happier. Through them I got to know my boyfriend Joonas, with whom I'm really happy. So at the moment the sun is shining to me J Of course I keep in contact with my "old" best friends and I see them every now and then.

I did see a lot of changes that happened in me while I was in Australia. I got a lot more independent, I'm a lot more open now and I'm not "afraid" to be the real me that I am. I just didn't fit into my old "form". But I've created my new form that I fit into perfect. I went through a lot of changes with myself and in my life, which was, of course, not easy but I got through with it all. I guess almost every exchange student goes through a bit similar kinds of feelings that I did. It was a lot more difficult than I thought, though. The only thing that stayed same in my life was my family. (Which I'm grateful for!) (*It is nice to know that a strong family foundation is still there for you!. Ed.*) And it's funny that sometimes it felt like my year, as an exchange student was a dream, I lived in a whole new world with a bunch of new people and habits. I just had to adapt all the new habits and visions into my life here in Finland. I'm still

going through the process although it has eased up a bit. That's why I'm a bit scared to come back because I don't know how I'll react to it. Will I want to stay there a bit longer, or perhaps never leave there? And now that I have managed to balance my life, will it be messed up again? I love my life here in Finland too much to give it away or turn it upside down again. But I sure do want to come back there and I'm pretty sure I will. Especially because I get phone calls (last yesterday) from my friends pretty often and they want me to come back. I just have to finish my school and get some money first.

So I will come back there! That's for sure! I just don't know when at the moment but as soon as I get the change to come, I will!

It snowed for the first time about two weeks ago and the whole country is covered in snow. It's so beautiful! I'm waiting for Christmas to come. I wish you all a very MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR! I wish you'll have a good time!

I would be really, really happy if I hear from you and what's going on in your lives! Special thanks to Peter And Helen who sent me the bulletin of the Maclean Rotary club many times so I got to know a bit of what was going on in my hosting club! I hope that some of you could pass my email on to the people whose email address I don't have. I hope everything is good over there!

Love you all,

Meeri

Sandra - it is veery hot!

Sandra Schäfer reporting for **Lenzburg Rotary Club**, Switzerland

Dateline: - November, 2004

Location: - **Mudgeeraba Rotary Club**, Australia



G'day!!

On the 30th of October I changed my host family and I have again a brother and a sister,



but they are a bit older =), 17 and 19 years old!! It's a very musical family. Lucy (sister) is at the conservatorium and Giles will go next year, he finished year 11! I got the opportunity to take violin lessons by Lucy!!

I had a lot of fun with the whole family, going to the movies, playing table tennis, playing some music, cooking or just talking and talking =)! (*Now that, I can understand! Ed.*)

At school we had our play in drama: "Finding Nemo". I took part and got some little roles to play=). (*I hope you aren't fishing for a compliment here! Ed.*)

One Saturday afternoon I caught up with Joseph up in Brisbane. He lives in Indooroopilly and goes on exchange next January. He goes to Switzerland and will live together with my family for the first four month!! It was very nice to get to know him a little and we spent a great afternoon talking and talking =).

Then I had my last day of school and my counsellor picked me up after school and I stayed with him for the next five days. One day I went shopping with him, that was great fun =)! Wednesday morning my new host dad came to pick me up. With him and his wife, both retired, I will stay until shortly before Christmas. They're both very lovely and we live in the middle of Mudgeeraba where I have a good access to public transport =). A few mornings I helped in the OP Shop. I'm reading a lot (I'm a bit of a 'readoholic' =D) I catch up with friends and I'm just enjoying my holidays although it is veery hot... puh... !!! (*Just wait till summer really kicks in! Ed*)

The other day I wrote heaps of Christmas cards for family and friends home in Switzerland and I posted them. And I got all the presents for my family and packed them in a big box. And I thought there was heaps of room left so I packed as well some stuff I don't need here anymore... that was a mistake... the parcel was very expensive and I had to send it by "surface". So it's travelling by ship and it'll probably arrive next February.

Now my family will have a second Christmas next February... that's life... I felt pretty bad about that... but they don't mind... =)

Sandra



Sarah - I was in the newspaper!

Sarah Matheson reporting for **Surfers Paradise Central Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - November, 2004

Location: - **Duderstadt/ Eichsfeld Rotary Club, Germany**

Well yet again another exciting fun filled month in the life of Sarah in Germany! I was in the newspaper this month, my first host dad shot 3 pigs in one night (have to mention this because he is very proud about this – as am I of course!), and it is now 15 years since the fall of the wall between East and West Germany!

The US election caused quite a bit of debate here in Germany – for about a week leading up to the election I think I was asked nearly every day what my opinions are on Bush, what Australia's opinions are and without or not we support him! Was a bit of a difficult question considering that most Germans are very anti-Bush however I was able to answer it and by the end of the week knew my answer before people even asked me the question regarding Bush and the US election! Speaking of America, I'm constantly told that when I speak German I have somewhat of an American accent!??? That makes me feel really good...

Well guess who was in the newspaper this month?? Yes that's right me... there was an article about myself and a Russian teacher in my school at the moment. This was the same day that we had our Elfte Elfte celebrations so I had my Aussie kleidung (clothes) on which was perfect for the photo for the newspaper! (*OK – I have to ask – what were you wearing that made it "Aussie Clothes" – blue singlet and stubbies – Driza-bone – you really have me guessing. Ed.*) The article was just about

my exchange year here in Germany... it also mentioned the fact that I love Gehacktes (local meat that is eaten raw) and that I'm very excited about experiencing a white Christmas for the first time! (*Now – I quite understand that! Ed.*)

I went to my second host brother's school and gave a presentation to his ninth grade class about Australia (they are learning about Aussie at the moment!) I would have to say it's at least the 8th presentation I have done over Australia – every time it gets somewhat better and every time I even learn something new about Australia. (Did you know there are over 40 million kangaroos in Australia?? That's more than double our population! I was so impressed with this ninth grade class. They spoke reasonable good English and understood almost everything I said (which can be difficult with my Australian accent and all! Speaking of which I was teaching my host Dad the other day some English – he now has a fairly strong Australian accent, especially when he says, "spoon". I didn't realise until after I heard him repeat me what a strong accent I actually have. Ok so now back to what I was saying...) One of the girls in the class wanted to ask me if I had snakes in my city – when she said snakes it sounded like sex – I thought she had asked me if we have sex in our city??? I was of course a little taken aback... as was the rest of the class. But I must say the class got really involved and actually knew quite a lot about Australia – I gave out kangaroo and koala key rings to those who answered questions correctly – so of course that gave them even more incentive to get involved. (*Ah – Bribery and Corruption! Ed.*) Later on that day my host brother told me that everyone in his class wants to come to Australia. Well I did tell them a lot about Australia but maybe forgot to mention the fact the flights cost about \$3000 return! (*Don't worry – just a minor oversight! Ed.*) At the end of the presentation the class speaker gave me a lovely bunch of flowers on behalf of the class – how sweet! This was definitely one of my favourite presentations that I've made over Australia.

Another presentation I made this month was to my sport class. Myself and two other fellow students had to do lead the warm-up. In Primary School (in Australia) we played Ball Games – so after stretching and what not (*I've actually never seen a what not! Ed.*) we normally have a little game or do a little exercise. I taught my sport class how to play Ball Games, in particular, Leader Ball, Zig Zag and Tunnel Ball. I was so proud! The boys were definitely better than the girls but I'm not sure whether they would be good enough to make Inter-School Competition!

Went with my first host family to Leipzig. My host dad had to go there to pick up the deer that he had shot in Hungary. (My host dad is an avid hunter by the way...) Then after we had picked the deer up we went into the city for a look around. We went to the Hauptbahnhof (Main train station – this isn't any normal train station – it has an impressive 26 platforms, is the largest passenger terminus in Europe and has n awesome three-storey shopping mall with over 150 shops!), Old and New Rathaus (Town Hall – the old Town Hall being one of the most stunning in Germany!) and the Völkerschlactdenkmal (Battle of Nations Monument).

Went with my host family that I'm with now, for three days to Bremen. I found it to be a really beautiful city, particularly now at Christmas time with all the Christmas lights and the huge Christmas Market in the centre square! Der Schnoor, a section of the Altstadt (old city) of Bremen, is filled with many cafes, restaurants and shops. All the snug little cottages are very pretty! This section of Bremen survived World War Two Bombings and now there is a protection right which prevents any of the picturesque cottages from being destroyed or rebuilt.

While we were in Bremen we went on a day trip to the North Sea to Cuxhaven. The weather wasn't exactly warm enough (what with 5°C temperatures) to going swimming, however it was still nice enough weather to take a walk along the beach. Another interesting fact is that on the North Sea there

are huge mudflats where you can walk across to another island on at certain times of the day. Unfortunately when we were there it was already high tide so we didn't make a Wattwanderung (walk across the mudflats)! Nice feeling to be back on the water – don't you just love that fresh sea smell!? (*True – but I've never come across a nice smelling mud flat, so I think you got there at the right time! Ed.*)

So that's just about it for the month... Take care, keep smiling and love life.

Love always - xoxoxoxoxo

Sara



Tess – I Can't Wait!

Tess Herbert reporting for
Grafton Midday Rotary Club, Australia
Dateline: - November, 2004
Location: - **Charleroi - Est Rotary Club, Belgium**

Giday, giday and hows it going.

Well its only about 40 days until I'm back in the land down under and I CANT WAIT. Don't get me wrong I'm having a ball here but I want to go home and see my family, friends and most of all my wonderful club who made this life changing opportunity possible.

Well what's been going on since I've last talk to you? Well I can't remember so I'll just start talking. All the new exchange students have arrived and have settled in pretty well. It's nice to see what we are so used to with new eyes.

I've changed to my last host family and have started talking my sisters into coming to Australia to do a semi exchange that means they just come and live with me for 6 months YAY. Also it started out as a joke but then it got serious. I have a Belge friend coming to Australia next year for a few weeks!!! I just want to bring everyone to my homeland as soon as possible. (*I hope mum and dad have a*



really large house, especially is everyone comes at the one time! Ed.)

The weather is getting COLD and the worse is yet to come. I mean if there was some snow then yer I could handle nearly DYING but no Belgium's weather is just plain old shitty. (Excuse the French hee hee) (*It looked more like Aussie English to me! Ed.*) but hey I gotta live it up because our weather is amazing!!!

Seriously I was doing this book thing I have today and I have realised I wouldn't change a thing about what I have or haven't not done except maybe get my act together and go see my mates in Austria but when I look at it yes I've missed a year of school (*I assume you mean, you've missed a year of school beck here in Australia! Ed.*) but I could never have done this otherwise!!! I think the exchange students who come into our country and better yet into our district are so lucky because where we are is amazing.

Christmas is coming up soon and the only bad thing is I have 3 families but only enough money to buy presents for one but oh well I'm sure they'll understand. I am praying to god (so pray with me Aust) that we can have a white Christmas. I mean after traversing the entire world learning a new language and putting up with the awful weather (that deep down inside I love) it is too much to ask for!! I would give up PRESENTS to have a white Christmas. Now I know I should have gone somewhere else to have it snow but I love Belgium so there!!!

My mum came over a few weeks ago and I showed her the sights of Belgium. We didn't have a lot of time so she didn't see that much. Then we went down to Bordeaux France to see Laetitia. Petey you would have no idea how much she's changed!! She's grown up! She had changed so much since I last saw her that day at the airport! She's so beautiful I wish I could re-live these last two year so I could spend more time with her! I cried when I saw her! I didn't cry when I saw my mum for god sakes!!! It was strange talking to her in French as the accent it so different!! I had a blast with

along on one cold, icy and windy night!!! That was an experience! I also held my farewell speech on 17th! I had to get it proof read 4 times, but it was a great success in the end and the club were happy with my efforts... and the Cadbury chocolate I gave them!!! At the beginning of December all the exchange students had a farewell weekend in Zermatt... home of the Matterhorn (Toblerone mountain). We all did thank-you speeches and went skiing and had a whole lot of fun. But it wasn't until a few weeks later that we all had to actually start saying goodbye to each other!! A lot of the Aussies are flying home together though, or at least part of the way.

I had my last day of school here, the day before Christmas Eve.

Celebrating Christmas here was really something special. Everyone goes to a lot of trouble with the decorations, but everything looks perfect!!! And the real candles on the Christmas tree just made it even more magical. We celebrated mostly on Christmas Eve, with a big family dinner, singing Christmas songs and opening the presents. I think Christmas here has a lot more meaning, and everyone appreciates it. I was given a lot of souvenirs (which I have already packed in a box and sent home)!!! (*I'm glad that you have been listening during the briefing camps. Ed.*) The week after Christmas we went to the holiday house in the mountains where everything is beautiful and decked in snow!!! My host parents enrolled me in a weeklong Snowboarding course!!! That was also an unforgettable experience!!! The first day was crazy, but I fought on and despite the many little injuries, I had a great time, completed the week and received a first level Snowboarders pin!) I also celebrated New Years up in the mountains with my host family, that was really nice too.

Now its less than 2 weeks before I'm on a plane back to Oz. But I'm going to just enjoy my last days here. It unbelievable that the year has already come to an end. I've had an absolutely fantastic and unforgettable time of my life!!! I've learnt so much more than I can

put into words, achieved goals that wouldn't have been possible anywhere else, and have amazing friends all over the world!!! Thank you for the support throughout the year!!

Cheers,

Carolyn

Eva - I still can't believe it. !

Eva Müller reporting for **Klagenfurt Rotary Club, Austria**

Dateline: - December, 2004

Location: - Southport North Rotary Club, Australia



December was the most exciting month since I'm in Australia. (*I'm glad it was your most exciting month here in Australia. Ed.*) I'm already here for 5 and a half months and I still can't believe it. On the first weekend was the outbender camp on. It was nice to meet all and it was good to tell them about our experience and about the country where they are going to.

I'm working for work experience at a vet. The vet's name is Rob Deshon and he is in my Rotary club in Southport North. I'm working in Runaway Bay at the veterinary for four days a week and for four hours a day. I really like to work there because I love to work with animals and Rob always explains to me what the sick animal has and what he has to do to treat it... ! I'm really happy that I'm allowed to work there and it is a great experience for me.

On the 14th at night, my host parents and I we put the X-mas decoration and the X-mas out. We had a lot of fun and it was very unusual because we always put the X-mas tree on the 24th up.

On the 16th of December Adelle's parents, Adelle and I we went to visit a few National parks. We went first to the Hinze dam then to Springbrook, Natural Bridge, Murwillumbah and we visited to different waterfalls. It was a very interesting day because it's great to see

how the area changes in such a short distance from the coast. We drove about 20 minutes and we were at the hinterland and then 15 more minutes and we were in the rain forest. (*And yet, on Safari, you can drive for days, and not notice much change. Ed.*)

On the next Sunday was my host dads X-mas party from work. We went to the Emerald Lakes Golf club and had a great night. The topic of the night was 80's and a lot of the people were wearing 80's outfits. I had such a good time and I also enjoyed to see the new Golf course over there and the new homes.

On the next day I went to my host brothers house and he had a little party with a BBQ and a few friends.

On Tuesday night was another party on. The host invited me to stay over.

It was a nice party but then in the end was it really sad because someone stole our stuff. The person stole mobile phones and cameras which was really sad because I just bought a new camera the day before and now it is gone.

The problem is that at the party were only people who I know. On Wednesday was our Rotary X-mas party which was nice as well. We played this funny game.

Everyone had to bring a present and we put them all together and everyone could pick one and if we didn't like it we could change it with another person.

On the next day was our neighbours X-mas party. Sumi is Japanese and she cooked Japanese food. I love her sushi and her seafood salads... ;-) On the 25th was X-mas and very unusual for me. It didn't feel like X-mas at all because it was really warm and without snow. My host parents, Adelles parents, Adelles brothers with their wives and I we went to one of the islands for the day and we had a picnic for lunch. It was a lot of fun and we built sand castles and had a ride in the biscuit. At four o'clock we took our stuff and went home to have a look if Santa was

there. I got a lot and really nice presents. It was a really different X-mas and it was cool to experience a hot X-mas... ;-) On the 28th Adelle, Wayne and I we went out with the boat and went to Sanctuary Cove. We had a look around there and went into the shops and ate lunch.

New years eve was also very exciting and different. We went with the boat to Paradise point and we were waiting for the fire works. We were five people, Adelle, Wayne, Jill, Michael and I and we ate and drank the whole night until we saw the fire works at nine o'clock. After that we went home at about ten and I went to bed because I was sooooo tired.

See you soon... .

Eva



Gregor-Patrick - December and January!

Gregor-Patrick Heine
reporting for **Wiener
Nuestadt Rotary Club,**
Austria

Dateline: - December, 2004

*Location: - **Surfers
Paradise Rotary Club,***
Australia

Holiday Report (December and January)

Compared to my previous reports this one will occur to be more like a short, cheap and tottery one but hence it will be easier to read. (*Ummm... Whatever! Ed.*)

This holiday was the best thing that could possibly have ever happened to me. First of all I changed my host-family what enabled me to experience a total different lifestyle and to have two host sisters with a lot of friends with whom I could spend a lot of time with.

I enjoyed the suburban "countrysideish" life with all of its pleasantries and surprises: Jogging around in the neighbourhood, meeting with local friends, spending some time at the rope-swing at a lake, eating two mangoes a day (which were a bargain - 12 for 10\$!) and above all travelling.



Did I mention travelling? Oh, yes, I must have.

I got the opportunity to go to Stanthorpe and stay with my opponent number, who goes to my place in Austria. I had a jolly good time there! What I enjoyed most was fossicking, walking about the bush, playing "Game Cube" and watching DVDs.

I returned home just before Christmas and spent it with my host family (family Lines) and I really enjoyed it. When I came back, "nanny" was there as well. My host-mother's mother. She stayed with us until the 15th of January.

I also got to visit "Wet'n Wild" "Sea World" and "Movie World" (this one even three times), because Tony (my host-dad) is the manager. And I can tell you: 'I had a lot of fun there!' Above all these things it happened to me that I was able to go to Jocelyn's & Al's farm in Ipswich! And this is absolutely wonderful. (As I write this report I am still on the farm, enjoying all its magical wonders.) I learned so many things about myself and about some things. I know how to cut down a tree, how to build an electric fence, how to play a tin whistle, how to deliver a calf, how to ride, how to work with cattle, how to sing, how to prepare food, how to have morning tea properly, how to eat healthy, how to lift weights, how to work and how to get along with myself. (*Wow! That's really great! Ed.*) And there are many more things like how to use an axe and how to get rid of unpleasant bushes.

I need to say that I stayed on this farm for two weeks, from the 1st Jan. - 13th Jan. and went back home, spent my time there (visiting Sea world, watching all "Fawlty Towers" episodes, which I absolutely love (and what makes me really happy is that I do understand the jokes in English!)) (*That makes it even better! Ed.*) and having a wonderful Barbie on the hottest day) until the 17th Jan. when I could go back to the farm.

It would take a hundred and eleven pages if I wrote everything down, but in fact I do not

want to do so. This is my life, it is not just a simple story written to entertain people, nor is it a book to be read and understood.

It is all about me and my humble self, struggling along through life and starting to understand its ways, and nothing more ought to be said about it but that I had the best time of my life on this farm.

I would like to finish this report with a quote I read on a stone in the garden of the farm:

'The kiss of the sun for pardon
The song of the birds for mirth
You are nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth'

And it is certainly true when you have walked about this garden.

Gregor Patrick

Jana - A little update!

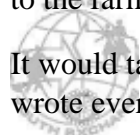
Jana Graetschel reporting for **Bonn-Rhein-Sieg Rotary Club, Germany**
Dateline: - December, 2004
Location: - **Grafton Midday Rotary Club, Australia**



Hi guys, I haven't written since a couple of months so now I will just give you a little update about December...

At the beginning of the month we had our YEP Camp at Mt Tambourine, which was really nice if you asked me. It was nice to see all the guys who are now off into all the other parts of the world. And there were a couple of boys who went to Germany and Austria, so we could teach them the most important German expressions and tell them about our home-countries with our point of view as Natives. Unfortunately we all just had 2 days together which was a bit too short to get through all the things that had happened since the last camp. (*It certainly seems that way. Ed.*)

The weekend after I already moved to my 4th host family, who I would celebrate Christmas with. The summer holidays started and I had real trouble to think about all the people I



wanted give Christmas presents to. (Unbelievable how many people you get to know through the year!) And then finally the very different Christmas, all the Australians had spoken before arrived. Everybody had warned me it would be so hot during that time but surprisingly I sat in Jeans at the end of the evening there! Besides that it was a new experience for me to unwrap all the presents on the morning of the 25th instead at Christmas Eve, like home. (*Nothing like doing it differently here! Ed.*)

After an early start in the morning, because my little host bothers and sisters couldn't wait to open everything we went to their grandparent's place, where more and more relatives of the family arrived. One of the families were Veronique's host family, but unfortunately she went with another family to the Norfolk islands at that time (!). After a wonderful Champagne-breakfast we all (35 people) moved back into my host families place where we decorated everything with... and everybody had to wear Santa-hats, which was really funny! All in all I had a very lovely, because a lot of people were worried I could be homesick on an event like that and looked after me all the time. Not bad!

The next day was Boxing Day, which we just spent at home to get ready for 2 weeks on the beach. But one thing really shocked us that and that was the Tsunami. We had a lot of discussions how safe we would be here in Australia, etc. It was just definitely something that I will never forget as a thing that happened during my year here on exchange.

And the morning after we finally went off to Woolgooga, which is just a 40 min drives away from Grafton. Down there I had very nice and quiet holidays. But we went around 4 times during this fortnight to the movies, I have really never done that before!

New Years I just celebrated with my host brother, who is 17 and a couple of friends on the beach. And I think it was the first time in my life that I wasn't cold outside on a new

years night ;) So that was my last report from the year 2004...

See yas soon

Jana

Sandra - Christmas in Australia!

Sandra Schäfer reporting for **Lenzburg Rotary Club, Switzerland**

Dateline: - December, 2004

Location: - **Mudgeeraba Rotary Club, Australia**



Christmas in Australia – it didn't feel like Christmas... it was too hot => (*Funny about that! Ed.*)

Before Christmas I went on some trips with host families and friends. To national arch for a swim, O'Reilly's, Dream world, to the beach, Christmas party at a friend's house...

For Christmas I went back to my first host family and we went up to Redcliffe to spend Christmas at my host dad's parent's place. I was a bit surprised we didn't do anything special on Christmas Eve, we went for a swim in the pool, had a great afternoon, something little for dinner and then the little ones went to bed early and we sat outside and enjoyed the evening. Home in Switzerland during the day we prepare for the evening, start cooking the big dinner, wrap up the last presents, making cookies,... and in the evening the whole family comes together and we spend the evening eating, singing Christmas carols, playing music, opening presents, having fun=)... and the same happens again on Christmas day, with the other half of the family. (And in the morning we sleep in=D) Anyway... => On the 25th early in the morning my little host brother and sister woke us up because they discovered Santa didn't forget them... so before 7 o'clock we sat around the tree and unpacked the presents. After breakfast we sat around half sleeping... ha ha... and then we went to Pomona to have a big Christmas lunch with my host mum's family. It was soooo hot... => In the late afternoon we went back to Redcliffe spent the rest of the day in the swimming pool

gg. The morning after, on boxing day, my host mum and I went out on the canal on the surf skis... that was good fun =). I was a bit scared of sharks... because the week before a pelican was attacked by one... but luckily we didn't meet one=). (*Somehow, I think you might just look a little bit different than a Pelican. Ed.*)

On the 28th in the morning my host parents decided to go to Moreton Island for a week, yippee, so we left shortly after lunch. We had a great time on the sand island!!!! And the perfect weather =). On New Year's eve were heaps of different parties on along the beach and it was lovely to watch all the fireworks =). The beach was pretty crowded!!

My parents rang me the next day while they were having midnight, I was really happy to hear from them, we couldn't talk for long though because they were standing outside and it was freezing cold (-15°C!!)... =).

Then on the 8th I had my next family change =). And I've been busy enjoying the rest of my summer holidays =). I went to movie world with friends, to the beach, and last Thursday we went to Australia Zoo and saw the crocodile hunter (crikey!!!) and lots of other shows. =) it was great, I loved it... hehe.

Sandra



Sarah - After a slight hiccup!

Sarah Lines reporting for ***Surfers Paradise Rotary Club, Australia***

Dateline: - January, 2005

Location: - ?? Rotary Club, Mexico

Hi to everyone back in Australia,

I just thought that I would let you all know that I am doing fine over here in Comitán. After a slight hiccup with my pick-up from Mexico City airport on the day I arrived everything else has been smooth sailing! My host family is just lovely and I have a

wonderful host sister from Germany who is helping me out a lot as well. Lucky everyone here can speak a little English, at the moment I am surviving on the whole 'Spanglish' thing! I started school last week which was very exciting even if it was a bit scary. People just want to hear me speak because to them I have some sort of foreign accent, everyone laughed at me when I told them my name because Sarah is not a common name in Mexico. I am settling in just fine, even if I can't always understand what is going on in class, I went to English the other day though and then it was my turn to laugh with everyone as they tried to speak my language. Suddenly I ended up with a pile of worksheets on my desk and all these students smiling sweetly at me! (*That will learn ya! Ed.*)

I went to my first official Rotary dinner a few nights ago and whoa! Are ours organised and formal or what? This is like you come in and sit down (men on one table, women and children, sorry students at another!) have a few drinks and a smoke then they start jabbering away in Spanish, people turn up at least half an hour after the meeting has started and just wonder in, others answer their phone while someone is speaking (this happens in class at school too, the students just walk out with their phone!) You have all these snacks and drinks coming and as soon as your plate or glass is empty they refill it, sometimes you have to sort of say, wait I'll have it a little later! This one guy got offended coz I had already had four glasses and I asked if I could wait and have my next one with dinner! The meeting starts at about 9pm and goes for 2hrs, after all this you get your dinner when the official stuff has finished! A big night out!

I am off to Cancun tomorrow with all the other exchange students from around Mexico, I think it is something like 13 hours in the bus. But what is that after a 28-hour flight from Australia, ok so that was broken up over two days. But it will be an awesome experience! I will let you know how all that went when I get back!

Please give my regards to everyone in the relevant Rotary clubs and I will keep you updated.

From

Sarah



Alex – Is not what he's cracked up to be!

Alex Smithers reporting for **Stanthorpe Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - February, 2005

Location: - **Weiner-**

Neustadt Rotary Club, Austria

The start of February began with language camp in the picturesque mountain village of Altmünster. We were there for a crash course in German because some of us had absolutely no language skills and communication had proved a bit difficult.

After arriving on Sunday I found that I was rooming with Matty, the only bad thing was we had to share a double bed...

Through the week we were introduced to lots of other exchangers from lots of other countries and were also introduced to the idea of doing work in class. (*What a novel concept - Working together - It will never catch on! Ed.*) Having learnt another language already I found it fairly easy to pick up the basics of German, now I just have to learn how to form some sentences and get a bit of a vocabulary together.

The two weeks at Altmünster were spent with the mornings in class and the afternoons and nights free to explore the village and the lake. Sledding on the hills behind the village was lots of fun even though it was really easy to hurt yourself, particularly if you're uncoordinated like I am. On the subject of goofiness I slipped on a patch of ice and messed up my face and cracked the enamel of one of my teeth, laughs for everyone, even me. Our first Saturday in Altmünster was Faschings, which roughly translates to

carnival. In the spirit of the festival Scotty, Matty Greg and I dressed up as babies for the festival, quite a funny night. The next day was Sunday we spent the day trying and failing to hike a mountain near Altmünster, there was just too much snow. Luckily these two guys were able to shuttle us up to the top of the mountain in their four wheel drives, not the safest car trip I've had but at least we made it to the top. After some goulash soup for lunch we sledged down the icy road with some dangerous consequences but no-one did anything really serious so it was a pretty good afternoon. By the end of two extremely entertaining and educational weeks it was time to say goodbye to Altmünster and all of our new found friends. I slept in the car on the way home because the next day was my first day at school.

My first day at school was really interesting, apart from understanding almost nothing that the teachers said (except English and Physics) I had a lot of fun and made some good friends in my class which I was very happy about. (*Always a good way to start! Ed.*) It was also Valentines Day on my first day and I got a rose from some girls in my class so I must have said something right in German. I also got a free ticket to my school ball so I was must have made a good impression.

The week was spent going to school and growing accustomed to trying to do some work again after many months of bludging. I also had my weekly visit to the sauna just because it's fun and very relaxing to my stressful life. I had my favourite class on Saturday morning, sport!. We played futsal and the Austrians thought that I was pretty good but they will see the truth before long. I went out in the fine town of Weiner Neustadt on Saturday night with some friends from school and then went snowboarding at a nearby resort on the Sunday so I had a great weekend. (*Isn't it magic, all the fun things that you can do when that cold, white stuff is on the ground? Ed.*)

Another fairly dull week at school but I went to Wien on the Tuesday to see a film about



Australia at the Imax with my class so that was highlight for the week. My school had its annual ball on the Saturday night and I scrubbed up fairly well in a tie and my Rotary blazer, unfortunately I wasn't allowed to wear my vans shoes but that was only a minor debacle. My dancing also hasn't got any better but at least I'm trying and I refuse to pay for dance school. If I can teach myself to play guitar badly then I should be able to at least waltz at a school ball. (*True, then you should be able to teach yourself to dance badly too, He, He, He! Ed.*) Oh well I have another ten months to practice.

Sunday was spent at Magna Racino, a very fancy casino with a horse racing track just outside of Wien. I went with my host counsellor and his family and he shouted me lunch at a very nice buffet so I was able to go home with a belly full of the finest Australian steak, something that I've grown to miss.

Another slow week at school but there was a Rotary conference in Wien set for the next weekend, another conference on Linz for the weekend after and then ski week in Schladming the week after that. I am hoping that I will be able to pad my reports out with more interesting things next month. As soon as something good happens it will be written here. (*Excellent, and if I get a copy, it will be written here as well! Ed.*)

Alex



Anais - I had two great months!

Anais Jouniaux reporting for **Charleroi Europe Rotary Club, Belgium**
 Dateline: - February, 2005
 Location: - **Mullumbimby**

Rotary Club, Australia

Hello guys,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!! Hope that your new year started as good as mine did!!!! I had so much fun on New Year s eve and I gotta say that I was a little bit homesick when I heard my family on the phone but I really enjoyed it!! Five days after new year, I went up to

Cairns to visit a girl who was gonna go on an exchange in Belgium and live with my family, so I decided to go and visit her to talk about my life in Belgium and I just wanted to know her better!!! I had so much fun up there, we visited Cairns and we went to Port Douglas as well, and we went snorkeling at the great barrier reef, but it was a little bit rough cause a cyclone was in Cairns but it was still fantastic!!! I got to meet her family too, they were all really nice to me, I stayed with them for a week! We went to an aboriginal center, TJAPUKAI and it was so interesting, I really liked it and we tried the didgeridoo and how to throw a boomerang, and we saw a lot of dances and heard a lot of songs but it was probably one of the things that I enjoyed the most!

I went back a week later and I had three days to re-pack my suitcase again cause my third host family took me down in Tasmania, for a month to do the wooden boat festival and to do sailing! So we drove down to Melbourne and we took "the Spirit of Tasmania"!! I stayed most of my time in Hobart, I sailed with my host dad and his friends, I visited a little bit around and I went to stay with a family that I knew from Australia for ten days, up to the east coast, and I had so much fun with them, they've got a daughter of my age, and they showed me a lot too!! and I went back to Hobart for the wooden boat festival, and it was HUGE! That was one of the best week end of my life, they were more than 200 boats in the port, and they had animations everywhere and you could walk around all the boats, and the JAMES CRAIG was there too, it's a sort of a pirate boat, and you could go inside, so we did and it was wonderful! But most of the week end we just stayed on the boat and everybody just came to say hello, we ate so much but it was so much fun!! And two days after, we drove back to catch the ferry again and to drive up to Stanthorpe cause we had our Rotary camp there!! That was one of the best camp that we had together I reckon, it was so good to talk about the safari, we were so excited and we had a good day on Saturday where we did a lot of walking, swimming and

visiting and had a good evening too!!! (*Ahhh – Safari – you should really enjoy that! Ed.*) but I gotta say that I was really glad to come home after being a month away, cause I didn't see my host dad and sisters and my friends too, so it was soooooo good to see them again!!! especially it was my last two weeks with my second host family, I stayed with them five months and I really loved them so it was hard to think about moving again!!!!

But I had two great months, the New Year started really well for me and I hope that you had two great months too!!

Anais



Axel – Strikes Again!

Axel Francois reporting for **Liege-Centre Rotary Club, Belgium**

Dateline: - February, 2005

Location: - Stanthorpe Rotary Club, Australia

Hi everyone!

How are you all? I'm very good. Sorry for not sending an e-mail before but I didn't have a computer (now I do) and I never had much time to do anything because of Uni and work and you all know how organised I am... (*Absolutely no comment needed. Ed.*)

I had my exams in January and I didn't go too bad... Anyway university is not too bad. It was just a bit hard at the beginning to go back to work.

And guess what??? I just got my plane ticket to come in July... I'm so looking forward to that!!!

How is the weather over there? Here it's getting warmer but 2 weeks ago it was - 20 so I was a bit cold...

I hope to hear from you and Australia soon. (*Axel, it was good to hear from you to! Ed.*)

Lots of love from me and my family.

Axel



Doline - my life in Switzerland!

Doline Charmillot reporting for **Les Rangiers Rotary Club, Switzerland**

Dateline: - February, 2005

Location: - Iluka/Maclean

Rotary Club,

I made a presentation of my life in Switzerland to my host Rotary Club. (*Excellent! Ed.*)

Some of the things I have done this month are, Sailing, travel to Canberra for 4 days at home of John Woods's sister and one day to Brisbane.

At Canberra: I fed a Wombat!!! Visited art gallery, parliament house, museum, mint, War memorial, hot air balloon display, barbecue with family, asked a pin (badge) to people of "Ulysses' Club" for my blazer

Doline



Jacob - the people are very friendly!

Jacob May reporting for **Parkwood Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - February, 2005

Location: - ?? Rotary Club,

Germany

Moin everybody

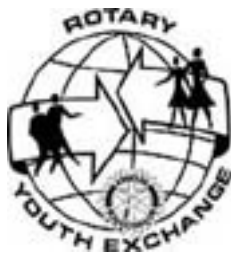
That is hello in north Germany, I have already learnt that the north of Germany speak another dialect to south Germany. It is good here the people are very friendly unlike many roumers you may have heard. I have organised my Euro tour which starts on the 30th of May to the 15th of June, should be good. (*I've never heard of one that wasn't fun! Ed.*) I went to school today and it was hard because of the language barrier also because I am the only child here. But the kids try hard and it will only get better. There is another exchange student from Asia and he is very friendly. The school goes from 8am to 1 pm, and everyone smokes all the time, which is different from back in Aus. The school half year finishes on Friday so this Thursday they have a big party



and go to school on Friday to get their marks a bit intoxicated. I have been invited to this so it is good. I am joining the soccer team on Saturday and they train three times a week. So should be good, they also play volleyball, tabel tennis, swimming and water polo. If it were up to me I would do PE all day, but that is not possible, haha. (*One can only live in hope! Ed.*) I think I am going on a ski trip in March should be good. I just bought a new jacket because mine wasn't good enough, it has been snowing here not alot but it is snowing.

Well keep in touch everyone love from Jacob cheers

Jacob



James - Having a fantastic time!

James Browning reporting for **Surfers Paradise Central Rotary Club, Australia**

Dateline: - February, 2005

Location: - ?? Rotary Club, Switzerland

I am well and having a fantastic time here in Switzerland. (*Good! Ed.*)

I am still having troubles making the pre fabricated report CD work so I am typing you a report here in this email... (*That sounds like it's partially my problem. Ed.*)

Everything is going wonderfully...

My current host family is Christine and Hans Bachmann. Christine is also my counsellor. They have two children aged, 11 and 9. I am getting along well with all members of the family. I am the fifth exchange student the Bachmann's have hosted so they know all about the program etc.

All the previous students have been from South America and their German was not very good, so the family finds it wonderful that I can speak most of the time in German and that I am actually able to communicate and have a relationship with the children, who I have babysitted a couple of times.



I attended language school for the first three weeks I was in Switzerland before going on a two week skiing holiday with my host family. My family was worried that I wouldn't be able to ski, considering it was my first time, however, my water skiing ability helped me learn quickly and within 3 days I was carving the slopes...

After the skiing holiday I started school and this week is already my third week. All the other students in my class are very nice and I have made friends. I have found the subjects a little difficult as my class studies Physics, Maths, Chemistry, Biology etc. of which I have learnt none of in Australia. But it is not a great concern for me, and my host mum... counsellor, has said if I am still having difficulty in a couple of weeks I might change to a business school, which studies less science subjects and more business and law subjects, which I did in Australia.

Anyway, I am still in a better position then most exchange students because I can understand the language reasonably well. (*That will certainly make things easier! Ed.*)

Swiss German I find very difficult to understand but I speak in High German about 80 percent of the time, and understand most of what I hear and read.

I have met lots of the families friends, and extended family, no problems to report. While on skiing holidays I was the dinner guest of the Credit Suisse Private Banking director... one of my parents friends...

I have also met my next host family who seem very nice, have three teenagers, and have also had exchange students before. In the summer holidays they are taking me to Greece with them for 4 weeks! I will be starting rowing in a couple of weeks which will also be perfect when I am living with my second family, because their house borders the Zurich lake.

I change to this family at the start of May.

In Rotary news... I attended the Welcoming Ceremony for new exchange students the first

full weekend I was in Switzerland, it was just about more rules etc.

I have also been to my club for 1 meeting, it went well and I gave a short 2 minute introductory speech. All exchange students have been told we will only go to Rotary meetings every 3-4 months.

I have also attended the Rotary 100 year birthday celebrations with 2500 Rotarians and all the exchange students. It was lots of fun and we stayed in Luzern for the night, after having lunch on a yacht with the Rotarians, and standing on stage with all the other exchange students. Heidi and I also met a Rotarian from the Ashmore, Gold Coast, club who was on group exchange.

I also went to the Geneva Motor Show last weekend, that was great.

Im in regular contact with my real parents and my club in Australia.

I think that is all to report... I hope you are well... and are having heaps of fun like me

Adieu, Tschuss, Ciao, etc.

James

P.S The area I am living in here is nicknamed the Gold Coast... what a coincidence.

But anyway, bye for now.



Janicca - Holidays were great!

Janicca Garduño
reporting for **Alzenau Rotary Club, Germany**
Dateline: - February, 2005
Location: - **Summerland Sunrise Rotary Club, Australia**

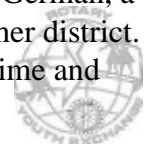
HI @ all!!!

The Holidays were great! I had a great family over the holidays that really made me feel like home. (*Excellent! Ed.*)

This was like my first real hot Christmas, the first one on the 25th and the first one without my family. It was a bit weird that the 24th is such a normal day here, whereas it's the big Christmas day in Germany. But it was nice. We got up early on the 25th and opened the presents one after another till everyone was done. On the rest of the day and the Sunday we visited both sides of the family, where we opened more presents and just had a good time. It was a good Christmas, I missed the good German Christmas food though :) I also liked how almost everybody decorates their houses with lights. In the week before Christmas we went to have a look at the houses at Trinity Dr. in Lismore and in Ballina. Some houses were like in the movies. I hadn't seen them decorated like that before. It was great. (*It does make a wonderful sight! Ed.*)

For New Years I went to Lennox Head and I had a really good time there. New Years at the beach and not being cold outside is definitely not bad! After New Years we went camping in Evans Head for 2 weeks. I've never been camping like that, so it was a good experience. We had a big tent, a BBQ a TV... (*Don't expect the Big Tent, BBQ or TV on Safari! Ed.*) We were beaching or relaxing the whole day and then played cards or watched TV at nights. We also went playing Bingo one night. It was fun. On one of our last days we went up to Sea World. We had a great time there with the dolphins and sharks :) I also went to Surfers Paradise 2 times and visited Mikkell there. We caught up with Eva and we went shopping and to the beach the whole time. The second time we had a beach day again with the other exchange students. We had great time.

Last weekend I went up to Brisbane with my Hosts. We stayed at Treasury right in the city. I loved it. It also was my first time in Brisbane. We went to the Southbank markets on Friday night and shopping on all the other days. I also caught up with another German, a Danish and a Swiss guy from the other district. We stayed in Southbank the whole time and just enjoyed it there.



Wow, I can't believe that 6 months are over now!!! I've even booked my flight back...
(*What a terrible thing to have to do! Terrible, but somehow necessary! Ed.*)

Anyway, I'm having the best time ever here and I live it!!

Thanx!!

Janicca



Matthew - so far soooooo good!

Matthew Rebgetz
reporting for **Coomera**
Rotary Club, Australia
Dateline: - February, 2005
Location: - **Zwettl** Rotary

Club, Austria

Well so far soooooo good.

It really has been an exciting month for me in Austria. A huge culture change, not just in the weather but in the people and their actions.
(*Welcome to the YEP Exchange Program Matthew, that's what it's all about! Ed.*)

I have a really great host family who go out of their way to help me so I'm pretty happy with that. School is hard as I can't speak the language but I will just have to wait until I pick it up.

It is a challenge trying to make friends as well as most of my class are nervous about speaking English to me but I found that if I go and talk to them they are fine. (*Good move Matthew, that's the way to do it! Ed.*) I am in a very small town as well so I think I have met everyone. Haha nah it has been great meeting new people and trying new things.

I have tried all kinds of new sports which have kept me occupied. Volleyball, Basketball, Rock Climbing, Soccer and I have started snowboarding and go at Night now during the week which I never thought I could have done.

The Language camp was awesome too. Meeting all of the exchange students was so much fun. Made a lot of good friends there



and had some funny times going out, we always had something to do.

Anyways I thought I would keep it short because I didn't want to bore you with everything I have done. I am having a blast and there are so many things to look forward to.

Next Month I will try and write a lot more.

Lata Mate

Matthew



Molly - !

Molly Turner reporting for
Goondiwindi Rotary Club,
Australia
Dateline: - February, 2005
Location: - ?? Rotary Club,
Japan

Left the land of Oz on Jan 22 (very traumatic, sniff, sob...) had a small pair of scissors in a manicure kit in my back pack (oops, oh well) and jumped on the plane to the city of snow and ice, (yay) arrived in Singapore with the other Aussies, and we all got quite excited about.... Travelators Ah! - yay we met some other random Aussie types from Western Australia, some people called their parents (this was at some ungodly hour of the morning heheh) and went in search of FOOD. (*Fancy being hungry at that time of the morning! Ed.*) And our respective gates, bummed around a bit more and then said goodbye to each other. Got to Nagoya and was most surprised to be greeted by a little Japanese Rotarian man with a beret and a grey bob (very cool) he took me to the domestic airport and got me fast tracked through the baggage check in line (Yay go Rotary). I said goodbye to funky little Japanese guy, sat around for a while (freakin out I might add I'm in Japan among snow...) and then started to get worried cos my flight wasn't coming up on the screen at my gate so I asked a flight assistant lady person (this involves much use of the word 'wakarimasen' (I don't understand) and pointing at my boarding pass) she then furiously gestures at me (it looks like go away but in fact it is the Japanese 'come with me' a gesture which

continues to confuse me) we run to another gate at the other end of the airport (and I know ur thinking I was at the wrong gate but I wasn't, they changed the gates grrr...) neways all sorted out and off to Chitose airport. (*And that's your story and you're sticking to it! He, He, He. Ed.*)

Arrived at Chitose where there was a horde of happy little Japanese men to welcome me with a welcome to Japan banner (in kanji) and an Aussie flag and... cameras (Rotarians love taking photos). Met my councillor, Ana-Maria Tobe, who speaks really good English, and my host dad and rang home briefly, couldn't talk much as I didn't want to cry in front of the Rotarians and my host father. We hopped into my host dads really flash car that is left hand drive, and off we went to somewhere for lunch, mmm... food. (*Do I pick up a distinct liking for FOOD! Ed.*) Next on my list was sleep but that wasn't really ever on the agenda with Tobesan in the car so we talked all the way to Sapporo and dropped Tobesan off and also my host club pres. and then off to the house of Asai to meet the host familiars (Hooray). um which was a little bit awkward at first but now its awesome cool, they gave me a cup of tea and I have my own room (yes with a bed) (*Wow – that's magic! Ed.*), oh and they gave me some slippers to wear in the house which were so never going to fit, so there was a bit omg look at the size of her feet... when I was kind of like um guys..? And we went on a slipper shopping expedition and there was some more omg look at her feet (hehe).

I live in this huge house (by Japanese standards) out in suburbia with my mum, dad, grandma, 2 brothers and a little sister. The house is a little bit traditional I think with Tatami floors and stuff, and for about the first two weeks every day I found a new room or door or nook (there are so many they just appear out of nowhere) and for the first week I just bummed around the house, adjusting, and organised stuff with my host parents, went to visit my school and get measured for my uniform (I still don't have it yet and get to wear whatever I want to school hooray tailor

made I think heheh). And I bought my camera (hooray a camera... oh crap its in Japanese... hmm). (*Learn the language – and it will be a snap! Ed.*)

The first weekend I went snowboarding with my host dad and bro, Suguru, my host dad and I were both learning (from Suguru), snowboarding is fun but I am really crap, I went down the mountain backwards because I'm Molly and of course its easier that way (I might add that at this point snow is still fun).

I went to the Rotary district welcome at which I had to speak (grr...) and met the other Aussies (there are 4 of us in Sapporo) and some of the other Rotary exchange types, it was lots of fun and we got to dress up in summer Kimonos and swan about doing some strange Japanese dance (yay).

Mon 31 was my first day of school, spent most of my time with one of my teachers trying to sort out my schedule (also in Kanji, actually everything is in Kanji??). School was... interesting, felt a little bit like a zoo exhibit, still do actually, but that's ok. Everything is very different and the school is huge, the kids clean after school (omg, which is pretty smart actually) and they have a really formal uniform with a little McDonalds tie (I'm just relieved that I don't have to wear the sailor moon tie Yippee) they all asked some strange questions and I had to introduce myself a lot, my top 3 awkward/strange questions in front of a class are 1) Can u draw our teacher? 2) Who is the best looking guy in this class? and 3) Where do the Koalas live? (I don't know) I then got sick and decided I hate snow.

Went to my Rotary on Tues 8th and met some of my future host parents, got a free pen (yay) had some interesting Japanese cuisine and made a speech (in Japanese, gee I'm good hehe) and continued on my merry way at school. Um had cool sushi train thing with my family (which was really good) Japanese food is and will remain.... interesting.

I went to some strange Rotary thing (Sapporo International .??.? night) which was loads of fun, full of expatriates, and saw some



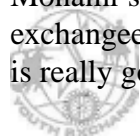
traditional Japanese... stuff, Ikebana (flower arranging, I know it sounds like an exotic sausage), um Koto (stringy instrument thing, very cool), and this cool instantaneous drawing of the Japanese sword thing which I forget the name for. We had some good food, and I mastered this little Japanese traditional game thing where u have to catch a ball on a string in a little cup or on a spike (its really hard). Met heaps of cool Japanese kids and some more exchangees and some very party hard uni students, oh and we did the strange Japanese dance again only I was better at it 2nd time round. And then waddled off with the exchangees after the finished to Odori park where the snow festival is (very cool), the snow festival is really famous and involves loads of people and these absolutely awesome snow and ice sculptures (which they bulldoze at the end of the festival... sniff). The next day I went back to the snow festival for a better look with my host mum, dad and Hiona (my little sis, who talks to me a lot in Japanese and is very cute), also went to Tokeidai (?) which is the oldest building in Sapporo (about 100 yrs old)(oh its a clock tower by the way) and went up the TV tower in Odori park from which the view is pretty amazing. Oh and I bought a good dictionary (Hooray Hooray). *(I always find the problem with dictionaries is that one needs to know how to spell the word correctly, before one can find it in the dictionary, somewhat oxymoronic to my way of thinking! I mean – if you know how to spell it – why do you need the dictionary? Ed.)*

The next day I did the 5km snow marathon with the other Rotary types (base camp was the YMCA bus, Young man...), I spent most of my time falling over my own and everyone else's skis and being yelled at in Japanese to get to the side, the pros are coming u can tell a pro by the lycra outfit and their phenomenal speed. All of us Rotary types then piled onto the YMCA bus and went and had... Ghengis Khan (which is strange Japanese BBQ that involves bibs and frying cabbage(???)) It was Monami's birthday (Monami is a cool ex exchangee who speaks awesome English and is really good at making Japanese stick in ur

head) so we sang him Happy Birthday as he stripped off and rolled in the snow? Which was contagious cos then the Canadian guy did it and then they all simply had to chase each other around with giant clumps of snow. (Yay). Next was KARAOKE Woo hoo which was... interesting. I had to sing lots, a Rotarian stared at me while I was singing wild Thing and I thought it was cos I was really bad but apparently it's because I was singing a really butch song. (?) Oh and made Nachos for my family which went down pretty well I think, I served it up and they kinda sat there looking from the chopsticks to their forks ah mori (that's me) how?. hehe. *(I assume you showed them what was made before chopsticks and forks! Ed.)* Um and then back to school for another week which was as always interesting, gave my bro the lurgy (Yes) Oh and Valentines day is huge over here all the girls give each other chocolate and the guys have a separate day in March.

I went to an exhibition of (something Kanjified so I cant tell u what) with my Japanese teacher, it was all this cool paper cut out art, all these really intricate pictures (it was Awesome). I am learning some origami too (yay). Oh and somewhere in all that was Setsuban which is a traditional festival where someone in the family dresses up as a devil and everyone else throws lollies and beans at them and chases them out of the house (the devil symbolises bad luck) and then u eat all the lollies and stuff, my siblings weren't really into it they were just in it for the bounty and I was all hard core into chasing the devil (host mum and dad) with my little sis, It was fun, was still finding little packets of lollies a week later (they have individually wrapped marshmallows by the way). *(Must make it interesting when you go to make Smores. Ed.)*

Oh And somewhere in there, there was also some very strange discoveries, such as a green tea and a melon flavoured kit kat (hmm), the little you can walk now men signs at the traffic lights have hats (?), and the Japanese word for green is midori. Next week is the girls day holiday/ festival thing and I am going into Odori to Kokusai Plaza to some party for it



which sounds fun and I am going to Asahikawa with my host family (we are going to the Zoo) the end of the Japanese school year is soon and I have to make a speech (hooray), there are two new exchangees coming to my school in April, an American and an Aussie, at the moment I am the lone foreigner at school (hooray) and there is some Rotary exchange student ski trip at some point to which sounds pretty deadly (Carnage, Ganbate) Neways I'll shut up now Love you all heaps missing you heaps

Love XOXO

Molly

Véronique - It was dolphins!

Véronique Gauche
reporting for **Mauléon-Soule et environs Rotary Club, France**
Dateline: - February, 2005
Location: - **Alstonville Rotary Club, Australia**



Hi everyone

I had very good summer holidays. I went to Norfolk Island during 2 weeks with my first host family. I was there for Christmas and the New Year. It was so cool. Norfolk island is really different. There are no stress, the weather is good, the water is clear and warm... I did some kayak, snorkling, boat, fishing, tube, wake board... I had a very good time. Then I came back to Australia and it was the time to change the host family. My new host family is so nice like the others). I stayed at home one week with my host sister and host brothers. They are very nice and we had a lot of fun. Then with my host family I went one week to Yamba. The weather, at the beginning of the week, was not very good but we watched the Australian cup. At the end the weather was very very good and we went surfing. At the moment I was very scared because I thought that there were some sharks but actually it was dolphins.

Then I went one week to Brisbane and New Zealand, It was also very good.

I went back to school. It was great to see everybody again even if I saw them during the summer holidays. I started year 12. I can see that all the student are a bit stresser than in year 11 but it is still very good. I went a Monday to Jannica's school in Lismore. It was an idea of Jannica. I think it was a great idea cause I saw an other school, students and teachers.

I went to the camp in Stanthorpe. Like usually it was really cool. Moreover I didn't see the exchange student (except Jannica) during summer's holidays.

I went with my host family to the Rodeo in Alstonville. It was soooooo funny. I never saw before. Moreover my host mother gave me special clothes for the occasion. I looked very funny. What is surprising the most it was the little children (7 years old) who did rodeo on little cows. We spent a very good night.

During this weeks I went o the Rotary meeting (each Wednesday night). One of the meeting was a barbecue in a park. and the president had some fireworks. Was beautiful and noisy!!!!!!!!!!!!!! lol

Also I went heaps of time to the beach with my host sister.

One week ago I went to Sydney to meet my parents and grand parents there. I waited one hour at the airport. It was so long. When I saw them I cried so much. Then we visited Sydney. It is really a beautiful and amazing city. I really enjoyed. We stayed there 4 days. Then we went to Ayers rocks. We drove during 3 days 9until Alice Springs) in the desert. It is obviously very different than Sydney but also amazing and beautiful. I wanted to take photos each 5 minutes, I couldn't stop.

Now I am in Alice Springs and we will catch the plane to Darwin.

We will arrive in Alstonville the 19th of March.



Véronique



Anais – March was a good month!

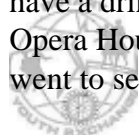
Anais Jouniaux reporting for **Charleroi Europe** Rotary Club, Belgium
Dateline: - March, 2005
Location: - **Mullumbimby**

Rotary Club, Australia

Hi everyone

What s up? how have u been? I'm good as usual!!! I'm back at school now since a few weeks, and it so much better than before Christmas holidays!! People are just friendlier, they really care about me and it's such a nice feeling!!!! But I had to say goodbye to my family yo move to another one, and it was really sad, really hard to live my host sisters too!!!! But my actual family is good too, it s a big change cause I don't have sisters anymore, they've got kids but they all grow up, but my host parents are retired so most of the time they are at home, and I really get along with my host mum, she spoiled me so it s really good!!! (*Nothing like being spoiled just a little! Ed.*)

I went a weekend down in Sydney with some Rotarians who invited me as a Christmas present, and I just fell in love with Sydney!! It's probably my favourite city in Australia!! I just love everything! We were lucky with the weather, it was sunny the three days we were there, and we did so much! We went on a ferry trip to have a look on the harbour, and then we went to the fish market for lunch, then the 3D cinema and we went to see the polar express and we just loved it!!! After we went back to the hotel, it was so huge, we were at the 30th floor and the pool was at the 60th and we could see all of Sydney, and after we got dressed cause we were going out to see the gay festival (it was the best I ever seen, so funny and so good!!!) and we went to have dinner at Chinatown and we went to Kings Cross to have a drink! The day after we went to see the Opera House and we went a mondy beach, we went to see the "pink salt" restaurant from my



restaurant rules and we had lunch but we had to go back earlier cause my Rotary club paid me the climb of the harbour bridge, and it was absolutely fantastic, amazing really!! And after we went to a really expensive restaurant on the harbour! And on Monday we just had a look around we saw the Prince and the Princess of Danemark, we went to the central point tower, and we had to do back to take our plane but it was really good!!

And I spend most of time with my friends again, we had a new birthday, we went camping, and for Easter I went back to Sydney to see my host brother who came in Belgium five years ago so it was really good to catch up with him again and meet his family!!!! So March was again a good month for me!!! (*Sounds like a lot of fun! Ed.*)

I just love Australia

See ya

Anais



Doline – Has been busy!

Doline Charmillot reporting for **Les Rangiers** Rotary Club, Switzerland
Dateline: - March, 2005
Location: - **Iluka/Maclean**

Rotary Club,

I have a full schedule, every Tuesday at Rotary, every Wednesday and Saturday at Sailing Club, every Thursday I play tennis

Rotary conference to Lismore, holidays to the place of Charlotte Belleflamme (from Belgium) for 3 days

I went to the conference in Lismore

Doline





Gregor-Patrick - Could not resist!

Gregor-Patrick Heine
reporting for **Wiener Nuestadt** Rotary Club,
Austria

Dateline: - March, 2005

Location: - **Surfers Paradise** Rotary Club,
Australia

Hello at all!

What can I say, I met this stunning wonderful good looking figure, and I ... *(I know, words just fail you at times like that! Ed.)*

I just could not resist. So we had a wonderful hot date when the sweet lips of the sun kissed the earth for the first time of the day. I am totally in love with her as it was love at first sight. She is my one and only true love and I wish I could take her home. However, I am seriously considering to get engaged and start a new life just with her.

She has the most wonderful name in the world but I just sweetly call her RX1. *(Any relation to C3PO? Ed.)*

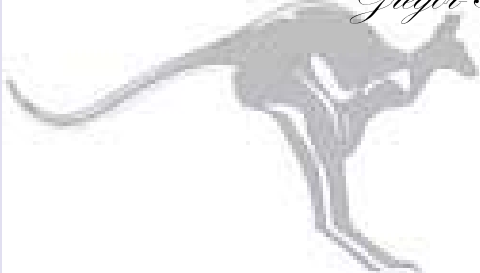
Please have a look at the couple of the year 2005. The picture is attached. *(Look in the Photo Gallery. Ed.)*

May you always have
Walls for the winds,
A roof for the rain,
Tea beside the fire,
Laughter to cheer you,
Those you love near you,
And all your heart might desire!

Kindest regards

Gregor

Gregor Patrick



Jacob - It seemed a bit complicated!

Jacob May reporting for
Parkwood Rotary Club,
Australia

Dateline: - March, 2005

Location: - ?? Rotary Club,

Germany

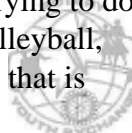
Moin,

It is my second month now here in Deutschland, and I thought I would fill you in on my time so far, like a good exchange student. I looked at the monthly report form and it seemed a bit complicated so this is my equivalent to that, I hope that is ok. *(Anything on "paper" is fine with me! Ed.)*

So far I have been to two Rotary meetings and also one event, which was bosseln. This is a game typical for my region, and basically you just throw a big wooden ball down the road, the aim is to get the furthest in the least amount of throws basically. It was very fun. We also had a Rotary orientation weekend about 1 month ago, the 19th of Feb. That was really good to see and meet all the other exchange students.

I have travelled to several cities around my area the bigger being Bremen and Hannover. I also went on a trip with school to London for the day. We had a 12 hour bus trip and the 12 hours in London and then 12 back on the bus, it was tough, but totally worth it, really fun weekend. *(Ahh, training for the Eurotour no doubt! Ed.)* I was lucky enough to meet up with my Auntie who lives in London, that was great because we hardly ever see each other, it had been three years since I last saw her and my four cousins. I also met my friend from Australia, she is doing a gap year in a school in London, so it was a really good time and London was awesome it makes Australia seem so young.

My next trip is to Austria with Rotary, it is our ski trip to Saalback and I am so excited, I can't stop thinking about it. I have been trying to do as much sport as possible, tennis, volleyball, swimming and soccer, of coarse. So that is



good fun and a good way to meet people who share the same interest in sports.

At the start it was really hard with the language and I was just so worried and tired, but now it is a lot better and I can understand a lot more but still not a lot, ha-ha. School is hard and really slow sometimes, I find I will have a really great day and then the next could be really hard, it was very up and down. Now I have settled in I have some good friends and also it is finally getting warmer. *(All this helps! Ed.)*

My host family is great no complaints there, it is very relaxed here, which fits my personality and life style perfectly. I absolutely love German food, it is my dream diet. I am in regular contact with my councillor here, my town is very small so everyone knows everyone, this is good but there is not a lot for young people here. But I am having a great time and looking forward to the rest of it, two months already, jeez that is fast!!!!

Ok so feel free to post this any where, I don't mind who you want to show. Please excuse my spelling and punctuation errors, my English has gone down hill since I've been here but I suppose that is a good thing. *(As long as your German improves – does it matter? Ed.)*

Tschüss (goodbye) Jacob

Jacob



Club, Austria

Matthew – It's been huge!

Matthew Rebgetz
reporting for **Coomera**
Rotary Club, Australia
Dateline: - March, 2005
Location: - **Zwettl** Rotary

This Month has been huge. I have learnt to snowboard this month and have been on many trips around Austria. It started off with an invitation from the school to go with class 2 to Saalbach for a Ski week. With one days notice I packed my bags and jumped on the bus with 50 other students all around the age of 16. It

really was an amazing trip. We stayed on the slope, with constant views of all the Alps surrounding. Waking up in the morning and going outside to jump on the snowboard was something I never thought I would do. I had a load of fun with the boys and girls from my class. I made a lot of friends and had a great time with the school. *(Excellent way to start things off! Ed.)*

After that week I headed back to school for 4 days and then headed off to the slopes again. This time with Rotary. On the way we stopped in Linz for the district conference and to celebrate the 100-year anniversary. It was great to see all the exchange students and to share our stories of what we have been doing. I don't think anyone was having a bad time. Also there were the exchange students there who have been in Austria for 7 or 8 months. So it was fun meeting all the oldies and getting some advice off them and some idea of what they have been doing.

The next day we all hit the road for Shladming which is another huge skiing resort. This week was huge, with 6 full days of skiing and dancing at night in the pubs. The Latino girls taught me some nice moves on the dance floor which was great. Each day we thought it couldn't get any better, but it just did. We found ourselves sunbaking on the mountains and skiing down with nothing on. Great times.

The week flew by and now I'm back in Zwettl catching up on some sleep. I am on Easter holidays for two weeks now, and I have organised a few trips around the country which will be awesome.

My Host family have been great and my language is slowly creeping along. I am still waiting for the day when I wake up and I am fluent. *(It will come! Ed.)*

School has been good when I am there. It gets a little boring sometimes but I get through it.

Well that has been me for the past month. Have fun you Aussies!

Matthew



Molly - Egads!

Molly Turner reporting for
Goondiwindi Rotary Club,
Australia

Dateline: - March, 2005

Location: - ?? Rotary Club,
Japan

Um Ok... Report time again... Egads!!!

Well then... this is gunna be shorter than the first report, cos I've gotten used to all the eccentricities, oh maybe not all but some of the weirdities of this country and its people, I hope..

Ok well... on the 26th of February I went to My little sister, Hiona's, Kindy performance thing, where all the classes get up and perform a couple of songs, some in English, some with instruments!!! They're so talented for 4 and 5 year olds!!! I was blown away by the instrument stuff... fair enuff it was only like drums and bells and stuff but they did it well, like they didn't just go crazy and make NOISE... and then that arvo I went to a Hinna Matsuri (girl's day festival... kind of) Party with my Japanese teacher, where we drank green tea and ate the little purple sweet rice cake things (I forget their name) and did origami and listened to some nice ladies in Kimono's playing traditional music... it was fun... the infamous ken was there... for those of u who can't remember Ken is from Tamworth he has been in Japan for 12 years and has the most horrendous and terrifying Aussie accent I have heard in my entire life... he is VERY friendly and it is generally agreed that he is... SCARY, but he teaches the hot Russian guy Japanese... so it all evens out... mmm.

On the 27th I went to Asahiyama zoo in Asahikawa with my host dad, my host mum and sis were supposed to come too but my little sis got sick, so my host dad and I set off to freeze our bums off in Asahikawa and watch the penguins walk around (the penguins do this walk amongst the crowd) and stuff, there was a zebra and a camel in a snowy paddock together??? A tiger in the snow... a family of orangutans who had really cool enclosure, um seals and the funny little Japanese panda that

looks more like a racoon I think, but its really cute and I bought a soft toy, one that my bro named Araiguma (I don't know what this means but people think its pretty funny), um yeah so animals are cool.

In between these dates u can assume I am going to school and bumming around and stuff, um I got my scary school uniform somewhere in there too. (*Ahh, so the school uniform finally made the scene! Ed.*)

On March 3rd I went to my class party, it was kind of end of year party, my host bro walked me there, cos I can't find my own way apparently, but I got to go home by myself like a big girl!! Yeah so my class mates dragged me off to take copious amounts of Pure-kura (u remember, the little photo sticker things??) with them, and then we went to a big shopping centre place to meet up with the rest of the class, mainly boys, boys pretend they aren't into Pure-kura but they secretly are, they just like it better when they can have pure-kura with no shirts and other guys... and a this shopping centre there was a pet store and in the pet store there was... A Monkey????! This is strange even by Japanese standards apparently. We went to a sports centre and played volleyball and basketball for the arvo, fun fun fun, and then we went and ate munjyayaki or okonomiyaki, not quite sure which, but both basically look like a particularly nasty 'Sunday morning special but actually tastes halfway decent, so no worries, u have to cook it urself on a little hotplate, so what the guys turned out was... well actually an interesting shade of grey, but they insisted it tasted good????! (*One thing about cooking it yourself, you only have yourself to blame if it doesn't turn out right! Ed.*)

At this point I am had a lot of random holidays from school so I went to the movies and stuff with people, so not very interesting, except the floor at the movie theatre, it is like this awesome glass disco dance floor thing!!! Very John Travolta...! I'm sure u can guess what I did????! Hehe



Um on the 13th of March I went to see an amateur Manzai performance by a girl I met, which was fun, I didn't understand any of it, and was like the only western person in the room so I felt a bit like a knob but that's ok... it was good to meet up with Seika again.

Um around this time at school they were getting ready for an English speaking contest, all the English students (that is to say everyone) was given this speech from some movie to learn and recite... very scary, I had to explain the term Goose-stepped?!?! and then they finally had the actual contest which was pretty strange.

Um the Japanese don't celebrate Easter or St Patrick's Day, which is fair enuff I dunno why we celebrate St Paddy's day actually, just an excuse to drink Guinness and get plastered I suppose, but the English guy at my school actually managed to find clover, REAL clover, and had that pinned all droopy and sad like to his jacket all day. Um this is also about the time that people start complaining about the heat and telling me what a warm day it is and that spring is coming, of course I was disbelieving ("see that white stuff falling from the sky??? That's SNOW... that means it's COLD OK???").

The 19th was my littlest host bro's B'day, I think I was more excited than he was, he went to school and stuff???... can't remember what I did... hmm

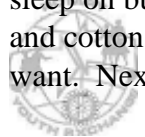
20th and the 21st was a Rotary Ski trip thing to Niseko (which is a really good ski place and is full of Gaijin (foreigners) mainly Aussies actually) the 20th was also my B'day!!! yay! got heaps of pressies and mail and stuff, so thanks to everyone for their pressies and good wishes!! My host dad drove my bro, Stacy (an American chick) and I there, my host dad is trying to learn to snowboard!! It's so cool... um so we dumped our stuff in the Japanese equivalent of school camp lodgings, so basically a dorm with bunks and gym mats to sleep on but we have tatami floors, slippers and cotton robe things to float around in if we want. Next we went off to the ski fields...

bum... bum... bum... I got given these little fat mini skis HOORAY!! And all the other people with us could ski except the 4 Aussies, so we spent the day happily rolling down the mountain, falling off ski lifts became a special talent of Bree's (an Aussie of course), and meeting lots of nice Gaijin who share their lollies. That night we braved the Onsen!!!... the public bath, was super cool, but a lot of the girls were a bit freaked out but honestly who cares grrr... we even managed a traditional gaijin incident with... the SOAP... it's not supposed to go in the bath and it did... well done guys!! Hurrah!! We played some strange Japanese games and hopped into this tiny little bus to go to karaoke, it got dubbed the 'third world bus' on account of us all being squished into the back on the floor and each others laps. At karaoke we were in good traditional exchange student form, which is to say we sung at every chance we got and sounded terrible!! Excellent! and as usual the JP types sounded perfect... grr... we then went back to our hotel, again in our little bus, and scavenged all the leftover food from the games earlier and had a little party in our room... in which some very brave people tried vegemite on these little sweet biccy things!?! Needless to say they didn't like it... the next day we did a bit more skiing and then buggered off home. At home my Host mum made a special dinner for Tetsuto's and my B'day it was a type of sushi called Temakizushi, which was really really good!! And I got lots of cool pressies which was really sweet and I felt so loved!!

I had to make a speech at school on the 24th, it was scary, but ok? then the Spring holidays started. Oh and that same week I got to wear armour in Naginata Club for the first time!!!!!! Yay!! It was so good..

Somewhere in there my host Brother convinced me to get a haircut, so now I am the proud owner a "Trendy Mullet" yes!

And now the hols are almost over, I have spent them putting off writing this report (heheh), studying Japanese, shopping, going to the movies and karaoke, getting fat on all the chocolate my mum sent me for Easter, being



harassed by my little sister and I went to Rotary at some point too and I FINALLY made a snowman!!!! HOORAY!!! They always tell me no it's a pain in the bum whenever I wanna make one... but yay I am victorious!!! Oh and I forgot I went to this cool Leggo exhibition and went exploring the seedy end of town with one of the other Aussies. Very cool day.

Neways I'm about done maybe I lied and this report is just as long as the first one, oh well.

Lots of Love, Miss you all heaps

Molly



Savannah - It's been ages!

Savannah Herbert
reporting for **Eugene Southtowne Rotary Club, USA**

Dateline: - March, 2005

Location: - Ashmore

Rotary Club, Australia

G-day everyone,

I know it's been ages since I've sent an email. I feel awful I can't believe how bad I've been. *(At least you have written this missive. And that's better than most! Ed.)* It just seems that every time I sit down to write one something ends up happening to interrupt me. But I'm not going to allow myself to be interrupted this time. Can you believe it's been a year since Australia? I can hardly believe it. Time just flies. *(Especially, when you are having fun! Ed.)*

So how are all of you? I know for most it's summer holidays so I imagine you're taking all kinds of fun trips and enjoying time off school and for those of you who are working I sympathize. I'm nannying for some family friends this summer. I really enjoy it, the kids are great. So I graduated this past June it was awesome. I got to go through to separate ceremonies one for my international high school and one for my regular. I was asked to host our big graduation and assembly and speak so that was a great honor and I had fun

with that. However, it's nice to be done, it was really hard coming back after getting to spend all that time in easy fun classes, I really had a rough year. (Denise you were right my friends weren't who I thought they would be.) And that's okay I was able to branch out and hang out with bunches of different people.

Amanda got to come and visit in October for my birthday from Canada. We had an awesome time I loved getting to show her around and re-live some of our ozzie experiences. I want all of you to come for visits I would love getting to take you around.

In December I had a huge surgery... Over Christmas it went well I had my tonsils taken out and some cysts in my nasal cavity. It was not fun at all. I was out for almost two weeks, but I'm feeling heaps better now that it's all been removed. So it was worth it in the end.

Lets see in March I had my big "coming out party" I was a debutant, it's a big tradition here in the states and in my family that when you turn 18 you be inducted into society. There were 35 girls who did it, it was really fun. We had a community service project that went along with it so I was able to work with my year 7 Spanish teacher who I love so it made for a fun experience.

In April we had spring break I spent it down in Arizona visiting relatives, the break from school is always nice. It was so hard coming back I was experiencing what we call "senioritis" When you become a year 12 you are referred to as a senior and usually by that time you're very anxious to get out of there and I was.

I've started seeing someone new he's very fun his name is Justin, he's 20. He's currently going to school and working here in town. He spent a semester in Africa so we've enjoyed sharing our experiences of being away from home.

It's been strange not having that global aspect in my life. There aren't really too many exchange students here. But there are a few, one in particular Marco from Italy he's so

awesome. It has been nice to share exchange stories with him.

Lets see... Oh I'm moving at the end of the summer which is August here. I'm going down to Arizona (near Texas) for uni. I'll be dual majoring in Psychology and Sociology at Northern Arizona University. It's a smaller campus right off route 66 near the Grande Canyon. I'm really excited. I went down at the beginning of this month for an orientation and met so many new and fun people. It was great it was like being back in Australia meeting all new people and getting to experience new things. I think it will be fun, and another adventure.

Well I've written a small novel so I suppose I will leave you with that. I hope all is going well for everyone and again I apologize for being such a terrible pen pal. I would love to hear from you when ever you get a chance. Best wishes, hope to hear from you soon.

Love Always,

Savannah



Symone - How is Japan!

Symone Speeding
reporting for **Alstonville**

Rotary Club, Australia

Dateline: - March, 2005

*Location: - **Yokkaichi West***

Rotary Club, Japan

Hi everyone!

Sorry I am late, but my second Home Stay's computer was malfunctioning.

How is Japan? Well, from my stimulating and unbiased opinion, it is such a modern country, with its technology being far superior and advanced than in Australia. In fact, since my last visit, in October 2002, it has progressed rapidly.

My personal feelings in Japan were the ideal way to start my twelve months as a youth exchange student. When I arrived in Nagoya, I immediately felt exhilarated at the prospect

of meeting new people and possibly changing my life forever. (*That seems to be a given with the Youth Exchange Program! Ed.*) Here I was in an Asiatic country (looked like a huge ants nest) with hundreds of thousands of people dodging pushbikes, jammed in trains, buses, trams, and sky rails like a can of sardines. There is also the sub conscious fear that an earthquake is about shake my foundations at any moment. The Japanese people, however, are very polite, very honest, well-mannered, well-dressed, very hygienic and very hospitable towards me.

January was a month purely devoted to organising my particulars and settling into my new cultural environment at "home," Rotary and school. My first host family were not a typical Japanese family so culture shock was a gradual process. My host sister was a former exchange student who went to Australia through Rotary two years ago. This eased the burden of awkward moments and differences between our cultures, much to my relief.

In February, I attended my first Rotary meeting where I was presented with my first allowance of 10,000 yen and a gift. After the meeting, a few Rotary members showed and escorted me, along with four Thai exchange students the "Yokkaichi Port Tower" (Yokkaichi is a thirty minute drive south-south-west of Nagoya and is the fourth largest city in Japan). Upon arrival, I was informed and astonished to know that it is the sister-port to Sydney Harbour. It was interesting to learn about the "Yokkaichi Port Tower's" history, progress and aims.

The Japanese are a strict and fastidiously clean people. Believe it or not, I have five pairs of school shoes: travelling, inside, gym, club and sport shoes! Although this seems rather excessive, it is their culture, and I am becoming accustomed to this practise.

In early February, I went skiing with the Thai students on Mount Gozaisho-Dake, approximately 50 minutes away. Although it was bone chilling and freezing, I found the windy experience quite enjoyable, especially



the tobogganing. Gozaisho-Dake stretches up to 1,210 meters, and is the highest peak in the Suzuka range. The border between the Mie and Shiga prefectures runs along the mountain. The peak can be reached on foot, but an aerial rope-way plus a ski-lift allows visitors access to the top from Yunoyama Onsen, at the foot of the mountain. There, customers can enjoy the views of Ise Bay, the Japan Alps, glimpses of the vast waters of Lake Biwa and (on a good day) the distant cone of Mount Fuji.

Partway up this ski lift is a station whereby you can walk to the world's only zoo dedicated to the Serow, a long-haired Tibetan goat. The zoo has approximately 40 serows consisting of 6 species from all over the world, including the unique Japanese serow which is registered as a Natural Treasure.

Early in my exchange, I attended my Rotary Orientation in the Gifu Prefecture along with five other Australians. What can I say? It was... interesting. (*Hmmmm, Only interesting! Ed.*)

Every weekend I went shopping with my first host mother and sister at different malls that cater for many diverse needs. Thus far, I have found Japan to be expensive and there is approximately a ten percent tax fee on every item bought; similar to Australia's Goods and Services Tax – GST. Also, it is remarkable how popular vending machines are, with one on every “street” corner: drinks, soups, noodles, ready-made lunches (obentM´) desserts, cigarettes, disposable cameras, batteries, magazines, tickets and so on.

I recently also joined a karate dojo (Shotoryu style) in Yokkaichi; a continuation of my training in Australia. Undertaking karate is definitely a major highlight of my exchange thus far! Its ideologies, epistemologies and methodologies are closely associated with my Martial Arts back in Australia. Although, its philosophies are somewhat different to Australia, as the teacher often hits the students over the head for making a mistake. (*Well then, the lesson here obviously is, don't make*

mistakes! Ed.) Karate is also free of expense for foreigners (pew!).

The majority of my time is obviously spent at my school – “000-0sYP[f]b - Maryknolljoshigakuin” (*Somehow, that didn't translate very well! Ed.*) – an all-girls Catholic school which was originally founded in the U.S.A and branched off to Japan quite some time ago. The curriculum is somewhat different to my Australian school, “Blue Hills College”. For example, calculators used for maths are forbidden (which I believe is a good thing), and oddly enough, I have yet to undertake a science experiment. Furthermore, the school does not have electives as the subjects are already formulated according to the teachers' pedagogies and epistemologies. And in regards to their school uniforms, I have to say, I now appreciate mine back in Australia, because here, the skirts are so long (very conservative – early 1900s), and we are not allowed to do anything (E.g. grow our nails or wear our sport uniform to school). Another rule I find unusual is that we have to sit Japanese style (seiza) all the time, regardless of injuries.

The girls are different to Australian girls but listen to the same music, etc. I find that (keeping in mind I attend an all girls school) they are immature when compared to Western girls and have encountered absolutely no ‘bullying’ situations. This, perhaps, has been the greatest shock thus far. I have also noticed that their style and fashion differ from the ‘Aussie’ teenage pop culture.

After school my friends sometimes take me to “Star Island” for pirikura-special photo booths where you can manipulate and scan the results to your liking. They are obsessed with it and keep albums of it, as it is their hobby.

Overall, my cross-cultural experience has already opened my mind, and lifted my spirits to a level of communication that I thought I would never reach. Living in Japan has already assisted me enormously to grow into a real person. It has given me a bigger scope and picture of what the other side of the world

really looks and feels like. During my short stay, I have been given the opportunity and aspiration to have a stronger sense of myself - spiritually and emotionally - to develop and put into my future workplace. So until next month, enjoy and appreciate Australia!

Symone

Eva - The most exciting month!

Eva Müller reporting for **Klagenfurt Rotary Club, Austria**

Dateline: - April, 2005

Location: - **Southport North Rotary Club, Australia**



Hello everyone!

April was the most exciting month ever. I experienced Easter in a very different way. It's not like at home where we have real coloured Easter eggs and an Easter meal. It was completely different. The Easter bunny came in the morning and put chocolate eggs everywhere. My little host siblings had to look for them around the house and it was cute to see how excited they were. I got some chocolate eggs as well and I ate the straightaway. (*Good Girl, can't let them melt of go stale, now can we! Ed.*)

Australians don't have traditional stuff like we have at home, but it was still a great experience.

After Easter I went to Alstonville to visit Veronique. Charlotte came to her place as well and we had a great few days.

Unfortunately, I forgot to fill out my travel form and got into a bit of trouble. We all went to Byron twice to go shopping and to have dinner. Once we wanted to meet Jessy and Anais but we missed each other, which was very sad. On Friday Veronique decided to come to my place till Monday so we went more shopping again and we went to the Gym and the beach. We had a great time.



School started back on Tuesday and I wasn't too happy about that. We went on a Geography excursion and we learned about the Gold Coast beaches and the problem of erosion.

My first school week wasn't too long because I missed school on Friday and went to a R.Y.P.E.N camp as a leader. Gregor came as well. Our job was to motivate the awardees and help them with the little jobs they had to do. It was a great weekend because I also learned a lot from the guest speakers who spoke about how to get confidence and how to get on in the future. The awardees were all from 14 to 16 years old and I made a few good friends.

This was probably the most exhausting weekend ever and I slept in on Monday. Actually I slept 16 hours non-stop. I just want to thank Sandy Foot for the opportunity and for offering me the spare place to join as a leader.

I didn't do much during the week. I went to school and after school I went to the gym.

On Friday I skipped school again because the yearly Rotary conference in Lismore was on. Gregor came to my place at lunchtime and Bob Pain (He is a member of the Rotary club of Southport North.) came to pick us up and give us a lift to Lismore. He had the great idea to take a different road to see a bit of the beautiful countryside of Australia. On our way we stopped at a big vegetable and fruit place to buy some fresh fruit from a farm. This was the most delicious fruit I've ever eaten in my whole life.

Our next stop was Nimbin. For anyone who doesn't know what Nimbin is, it is a little hippy village where marihuana is legal and you can see people in the streets smoking it. It was just funny to have a look around the shops and see bongos and stuff everywhere. After driving for another hour we finally came to Lismore where we met each other at the workers club. A few exchange students were already there and it was great to see them all again. We didn't do much at the conference we only had a little flag ceremony and then we

took the bus to Ballina where we met our home stay families for the next two days. Jannica and I stayed with a lovely family named Baily. They own a sugarcane farm and it was very interesting to learn about how to produce sugar.

The next day we got together at Ballina High school, which has a big section of marine studies. We had a look around the school and it was very interesting because they have aquariums with a lot of fish. We also saw skeletons of dolphins and whales. After that we went for a drive in an old army car to the beach. It was the most beautiful thing I've ever done. It was great to speed along a deserted beach and to enjoy the fresh breeze from the ocean. We also visited the shopping centre of Ballina for lunch. At night we went to Tony Elle's place for a BBQ and a lot of Rotarians came along as well. The next day we had to get up very early to go back to Lismore to the conference. Our job was to introduce ourselves and to listen to some of the guest speakers. After that I went back home with Sandy, Kay and Stacy.

The following week was actually not that exciting. We had our cross country run on Tuesday and I came 8th which I'm very proud of. The other days I just went home after school and went to the gym.

On the weekend I went shopping to Pacific Fair and met Stacy, Gregor, Veronique, Charlotte and Mikkel. I bought a lot of stuff for the Safari tour and I'm already so excited about it. (*Fancy getting excited about Safari! He, He, He. Ed.*) Stacy and I went to Surfers at night and met Charlotte and Vero for dinner. I stayed over at Stacy's place and the next day I could hop on her host sister's horse for a few moments.

It was great because I used to ride for about five years and I really miss it. We also went for a short visit to Natural Bridge and saw a few glowworms in the cave.

This week I'm looking forward to the safari tour and I'm starting to pack.

I'll also go to the gym and to the weekly Rotary dinner.

See you soon!!!!!!

Eva



Joshua - Eurotour!

Joshua Robertson
reporting for **Warwick Sunrise Rotary Club**,
Australia

Dateline: - May, 2005

Location: - ?? Rotary Club,

Germany

G'day all again... from now-and-then the sunny rarely warm Germany.

Man I miss the warmth and the Sunshine of good 'Ole Australia.

Anyways...

THE EUROTOUR!!!! It was flippin' awesome stuff. On the 25th of April, Montag (Monday), I got to miss out school, Soo Cool!! And pack for the Rotary Europe Tour for 17 days. I had to take the Train from Itzehoe to Hamburg, where I met up with Vanessa, another Australian exchange student, and we then travelled to Berlin the starting point of this tour. For me it was four hours by interconnecting trains to get from one side of Germany to the other, *Laugh*, most of my friends here think that's awfully long.

So 51 students, including myself, travelled for 17 days in a bus with Harry our Bus driver, Peter, Klaus and Heidi as our guides. So we stayed two nights in most places we visited, only two we didn't. We toured Berlin on the second day, slept, then to Pottsdamn.

Dresden was one of my most favourite places. It has so many, I mean SO MANY cathedrals, other Churches, museums, palaces, and massive who-knows-what's-its, all jam-packed up against the river Elbe. Every building had some type of gold on it, either gold leaf, gold statues or gold paint decorating the buildings. Most of the building have naturally been standing there longer than Australia has been founded. Pretty cool stuff.



Prague, what can I say. Well it has the cheapest drinks you'll find anywhere. The place was also quite beautiful. One particular night a group of us Rotary students went to a nice cafe and were fortunate to see a fireworks show go off above our heads. The Currency is also different from the Euro. They use Crowns. I changed 20€ for 500 Crowns, it was funny to keep thinking we were all rich as kings. (*With a good supply of Crowns, no wonder you felt like Kings! Ed.*) Well it doesn't mean much when you order a meal and it costs 180 Crowns.

Vienna. Beautiful. I remember when I first flew to Deutschland for this exchange, the airport was one of the best I have ever seen. Besides that we toured and visited some more churches. We weren't halfway through this tour and all we mostly see are churches. Ok enough already. More to come yet...

VENICE. As you can tell... THE BEST PLACE EVER!!!! (The second favourite place) I was hanging out for this part of the trip, as naturally this is where the movie Italian Job was shot, one of my all-time favourites. So we got to go to St. Marco's Square (or St. Mark's Square for you English speaking types ;) and go over and under the Rialto Bridge. Under you say??? Well we were also fortunate to go on a Gondola ride. VERY EXPENSIVE!!! Naturally as a tourist destination, everything cost a lot of Euro, not nice for the Rotary Exchange student, but hey we learn fast how to make Euro go far, though I did spend a little too much there. As for the Gondola ride I went on two. The first we went as a huge group of 27 people, (the others would do it later) that cost 15€ each, then my second was a short trip for 50 cents using the gondola as a ferry. ;) Hey it was worth it.

MASKS well Venice is famous for it's Carnivale. You couldn't pass one stall, (and there was many) and not see most of the wares as paper mache (traditional) or as ceramic masks hanging from all sides of the stand. So naturally everyone I think has got a mask now.



I also fell in love with the weather, which I was most looking forward to as well. 31 degrees in Venice, during the day, and with it a beautiful summer Mediterranean weather at night too. We stayed out most of the night when we could, we had to be back at the hotels by 12 o'clock, but most of the time we forgot. ;) So on our last night we went swimming at 12 o'clock and the water got deep extremely slowly. And it was so warm. You could walk out and drip-dry without fear of getting cold because the air was still warm. Then when we finally got back to the hotel, the heavens opened and dropped a deluge of rain until I fell asleep (Yes I got some sleep, even if it was only three hours J), it reminded me of our Queensland summer rains. Great stuff.

Nesselwang. No it's not Asian. It is back into Deutschland for us. We stopped here for two nights as well. Well most Germans ask me why did we stop there, when I explain they're like, "Oh Yeah, I forgot!" The reason was we are in Füssen. The place of the fairytale dream castles. Neuschwanstein. And a couple others. It is on a peak jutting out of the base of a massive mountain behind it. It is grey with heaps of towers and looks over a flat farmland and a tiny village. Behind it is rough pine trees and a little gorge of water coming down from the mountain. The reason I mentioned Grey, is because across from it on the opposite mountain at the base is another castle, Orange. Yes orange. It also has the towers happening and it quite cool.

München, (Munich) so the land of close Mountains, Beer and a beautiful place to visit in the Summer.

We went to the Hofbrauhaus (Royal Beer House) in the October Festival, there are three major nations gathered there under the huge tents erected outside the beer house and inside it too. The three nations are, Australia 1st, New Zealand 2nd, America 3rd and Deutschland 4th, Pretty funny. There was actually a fire in München a while ago and the Hofbrauhaus was called in to help. The fire service was out of water and needed help, so the Hofbrauhaus, which sits on 20,000 litres

of beer, brought out 10,000 litres and put out the fire, no worries there the alcohol had not yet been added, it was in the process of fermenting. Awesome, Beer saves lives again ;) Nürnberg, It is a stop on our way to our final destination of Weimar. This place holds a massive wall surrounding most of the city, it has been there, perfectly still and resolute and intimidating since the medieval ages, cool also.

Weimar, well this place has a lot of colourful history, but we shall leave this for your investigation. ;) We travelled back to Berlin on the 11th of May, our Eurotour at an end. We were sad and departed our separate ways on different trains. I will miss many of the friends I made here, travelled with and slept with for the past 17 days. None of us wanted to return to our great exchanges, because we all wish the Eurotour wouldn't end. (*Sounds a bit like the Safari back here in Aus, we just want it to go on forever! Ed.*)

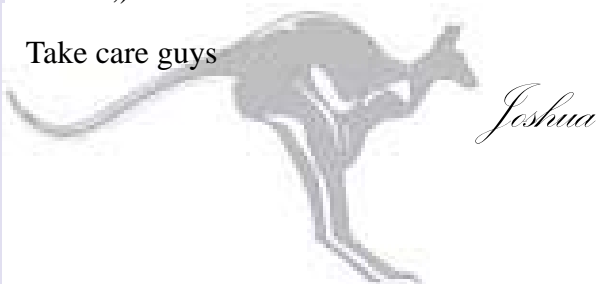
Returning home my language has improved greatly, though we, the students, mostly spoke English or Spanish on the tour, though the tours in the cities were in Deutsch.

I have also hit my first real Blues a little while ago, the trip was a high, the honeymoon period is over and I sorta felt like it was all getting to me. BUT...

Pushing through is part of the experience of this Exchange year, and I still don't regret this choice of experiencing a different culture.

It's great now, most of us are about to change host families or have just done. I change host family for the first time on June 14th. My Deutsch is coming along and I can understand quite a bit now. The only thing I really need to worry about now is my Grammar as it doesn't exist. ;)

Take care guys



Meeri - Hello Maclean!

Meeri Maksniemi reporting for **Vihiti Rotary Club, Finland**

Dateline: - July, 2005

*Location: - **Maclean** Rotary Club, Australia*

Hello Maclean!

How are you all? It's been a long time since I heard from you guys... I sent you an email before my final exams (so that would've been in February-March) but didn't get a reply from anyone... A lot of things have happened to my family and me since my last email so I better start to get onto it!

My family is moving to Sweden later on this year. My dad is going to work there for a couple of years. My dad is leaving to Sweden in September-October though he'll be home in Finland for most of the time... It's just a formal thing that all his mail has to go to Sweden... So in theory he'll live in Sweden when in fact he will be in Finland. (*It's OK Meeri, I'm not confused, I think! Ed.*)

Anyway, my mum, Erika and Marie are moving to Sweden in December. My sisters will go studying in a Swedish school and my mum will go to work. They're all getting very excited about it, it'll be a new experience for them. They've visited Jönköping, the town that they will move to, a few times and they already have a house there. I'll go visit them as many times as possible, during my holidays etc. My sister Erika (16) is on a summer exchange in Greece at the moment. She is enjoying herself and will be back home in a few weeks.

An Aussie girl, Samantha, is going to live with us in a few weeks. She's been in Finland since January. She's a nice girl and I hope that she'll enjoy living with us. I've already spent time with her and we get along very well. Marie, my youngest sister (12) is really looking forward for Samantha to move in with us, she can't stop talking about it! Samantha will live with us for two to three months.



What comes to my life, there will be quite many changes... I met Joonas, my boyfriend, not long after I got back from Australia. We're moving in together in September to Espoo, about 40km from our current homes. I got accepted to a business university, which is very respected. It's in Espoo, every applicant had to take an entrance exam, which tests different kinds of skills in mathematics, physics, memory and logic. Then you also get marks from work experience and your success at school. Then they count all the marks and the 25 best get in. They inform you by letter about 1,5 months after the entrance exam. I was SO nervous and restless before getting the results... About 500 applied and only 25 were accepted. Finally the day came (a week ago on Monday) there was a big envelope in our mailbox, I ripped it open and it said "Congratulations! You've been accepted to... etc.." Joonas told me that I had screamed so loud after reading it that his eardrums had almost broken... oops! (*Congratulations on being accepted! Good work. Ed.*) So I start on the 25th of August and I'm really, really looking forward to it! So after I got the news that I had been accepted Joonas and I applied for an apartment (you can't apply for a student apartment until you've been accepted to a school) and the next Thursday they informed us that they have an apartment for us. It's brand new, with a terrace and a small backyard. It's a two-room apartment. We're going to have a look at it tomorrow though we've already paid the pledge payment. It's VERY rare for a student to get an apartment that is brand new.

So we are very happy at the moment. I've got two weeks left of work (after this week) and then I have one week of holiday and then I start school. I'm really looking forward to my holiday because the last time I was on holiday was last September (almost a year ago!) when Joonas and I went to relax to the Canary Islands for a week. I started working 3 days after my final exams and I've been working for 4 months now. I graduated in July. I can't wait for my holiday! Joonas and I are working to save money so that we don't have to work while studying. We can then concentrate on studying. Joonas is joining the army (it's compulsory for at least 6 months, max 12 months,

depending on what the executives decide. He'll get to go on holidays every now and then though.

I really hope to hear as many of you as possible! I don't have everyone's email addresses so could you (the ones who get this email) be so kind that you'll pass this on to the ones who didn't get this! Thank you! I better go now so I don't get late from work! I try to write to you after I've started my new school! Tell all the latest news!

Love you all,

Meeri

PS. A friend of my dad is making a study on hunting... He asked me if I could ask you if any of you (or your friends, acquaintances or relatives) know about Australian hunting, It would be very important for him and his studies if he could get a contact from Australia!! He'd appreciate it very much!



Alex - Such a great experience!

Alex Smithers reporting for **Stanthorpe Rotary Club, Australia**
Dateline: - August, 2005
Location: - **Weiner-**

Neustadt Rotary Club, Austria

Hi,

Things are much better now, no longer living underground. I've been travelling Austria with my exchange student friends, its been such a great experience, we stayed in a hut in the mountains near Switzerland and then we camped at a lake near Salzburg but it rained so it was not so much fun but it was still good. I also went to the concentration camp at Mauthausen, it was absolutely horrifying to think of how many people had been murdered and tortured in a small cluster of buildings at the top of a grassy hill overlooking the Danube, it was just shocking to see the gas chamber and metal rafters for hanging people and room where thousands of people had been shot from behind and then burnt, it has definitely changed my view on the world.

I've been talking to my parents and some of my friends who just went straight to uni this year and most of them are having problems concentrating on what they are doing and not really liking the courses that they chose, so I think that its been really good to go and experience something other than school and Stanthorpe for a year and try to get a perspective on the world that I just wouldn't have otherwise if I just went to Brisbane to uni this year. *(It certainly broadens your horizons somewhat! Ed.)*

What you said about food being tampered with and modified too much is absolutely true, its bad enough in Australia but here in Europe nothing is ever really fresh and the food is just terrible most of the time, summer is better than winter of course but its still pretty bad.

Materials engineering sounds very interesting to me and its going to be very necessary in the future because we are running out of resources and the only way to develop new products is to develop the ones that we have now. I did a bit of research on smart plastics on the net and it seems really interesting and the applications that they've thought of already are only just touching the surface of what could really be done. I've been reading lots of physics and maths books lately, my mum sent me a book on a theory on a variable speed of light, a book on chaos and a book on the proof of Fermats last theorem, all of them were really good, my brain feels a bit under stimulated this year.

Hope all is going well at school, term 3 should be a busy time for the year 12s and the teachers but I tried really hard just not to stress myself last year.

Alex

