Friendship Force Exchange

to

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

23 SEPTEMBER – 17 OCTOBER 2016
AMBASSADORS

Debbie Lattey (ED) Kapiti Coast
Jan Reid (Assistant ED) Kapiti Coast
Graham & Theresa Tufnail Kapiti Coast
Dorothy & Barrie Woods Kapiti Coast
Joyce Gibson Kapiti Coast
Judith Dudson Kapiti Coast
Jude Bismark Kapiti Coast
Sue Harris Kapiti Coast
Rhonnda Harris Kapiti Coast
Diana Bradshaw Kapiti Coast
Jaye Howey & Christine Meredith Wellington
Reg & Irene Clothier Tauranga-WBOP
Jill Carr New Plymouth
Rob & Linda Kilpatrick Huntsville, Alabama
On the 23rd September 2016, nine of us left Auckland Airport for Houston on the start of our Friendship Force exchange trip to Houston, Raleigh, Quebec City and Hartford. The rest of the travellers all arrived from various other places so we all met up in Raleigh. The plane trip was uneventful, not like our return trip to NZ!!!!!!

We were met at the airport from members of the Houston FF to a temperature of around 35 degrees. Rather hot!!

After a lovely breakfast at Hotel Indigo Houston Galleria (we were impressed with the electronic charging stations sited in the centre of each table), we met with the local Friendship Force members, who had offered to host us for the day. They had organised a bus tour of the city for us, and we proceeded together to enjoy a very detailed presentation of Houston City.

The driver showed us a very interesting collection of street art, installed in public spaces for a limited time, and then changed again. We saw a house completely covered in aluminium beer cans which the owner had installed to avoid having to paint his home; beautiful stainless steel towers sited alongside the river, each panel had been laser cut with many different designs giving a delicate tracery pattern to the work; a water fountain in the river which was reminiscent of a Rotorua boiling mud pool. We visited a museum of early settlers' collections of furniture, tools and art, and we visited several historic homes which had been re-sited to a central city park. Many city forefathers have endowed the city with funds and their homes have been preserved, Ima Hogg had donated a reserve, Rice University and its large campus was endowed by her brother.

Lunch was shared at an amazing food court in the City, and we enjoyed checking out the different food styles and goods on display.

We had the opportunity to talk with different members of the Houston Friendship Force, and noted they were very proud that Houston is on the verge of becoming the third largest city in the USA. Some members had been to New Zealand and told us they had noticed some sheep! and were intrigued with our “Sleeping Policemen” (traffic speed humps on the roads).

A new peace and conservation garden with a memorial, water feature and a reflection pool was a very pleasant stop in the afternoon. There are many large and beautiful homes which the driver pointed out to us before returning us to the Hotel Indigo. We had dinner with our new friends at a local restaurant on Saturday evening and proceeded to Raleigh Sunday morning. We had enjoyed a lovely day in Houston with their members and friends.
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hecked out of our lovely hotel Indigo Galleria after waiting inside for our shuttles which were waiting outside for us. Fast trip to airport where we nearly lost the other half of group! Met up at coffee shop!

Arrived on time at Raleigh "the City of Oaks" named after Sir Walter. Others in the group who had been elsewhere, along with our hosts, met us at the airport where we surprised them with our singing. Off we all went to our first hosting!

Debbie and I spent many hours during our visit playing Rummikub and card games with our fun hosts, Mike and Elaine Rakouskas.

Monday 26 September

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he first day of our Raleigh Exchange, and although we had met other hosts briefly when we’d arrived at the airport the previous evening, I was looking forward to meeting everyone, and to starting to work our way through what looked like a very interesting and full week’s programme.

For many of us, the day started with a visit to the Sertoma Arts centre – a well-equipped Community Centre where people indulged their interests in various Arts – followed by a stroll around the pretty Shelley Lake before driving to ED Mike and Elaine’s home for an early lunch. A very pleasant occasion with good food and enjoyable welcoming speeches.

Soon we were off to the North Carolina Legislative Building and, despite the fact that parts of it were closed for refurbishment and removal of asbestos, we enjoyed a very informative tour giving information relating to the House of Representatives and the Senate. The classical marble and granite building was impressive, as was the Governor’s mansion which we walked to, a short distance away.

The NC Museum of Natural Sciences and the Science Centre were next on our programme and our final visit for the day was to the NC Museum of History.

There was so much to see, read and try to understand, that I think some of us felt we were close to “information overload” by the end of the day.

Christine and I “shouted” our host, Carol, dinner at the Flying Biscuit on the way home. It was a great opportunity to chat over the very enjoyable and varied events of the day.
We meet up at the Mordechai historical park where there were several houses which had been moved onto the site so they could be maintained and refurbished. The beautiful Mordecai home was the original resident of the plot of land.

We were taken by a refurbished tram on a tour of the historic city and surrounding areas. It was interesting to see some of the original homes had been moved, changed into building sites for more modern buildings or completely refurbished, those of which were refurbished were repainted in the colours which had been used from the turn of the 19th century. It was a very interesting and informative trip around the old original pasts of Raleigh.

From there we went on a guided tour of the Hunt Library at NC State Centennial Campus. This was to prove a real highlight enabling us to see how the new Hunt Library building, how books are now catalogued and stored, so that students order the books they needed for their study via computer. There are currently 1.5 million books stored in this way with room to more than double that storage. The library is now Wi-Fi and computer driven. The books stacked in metal boxes 20 stories high. Each box contains 150 books. All the books are ordered by computer, the computer ‘tells’ the electronic ‘arm’ which box and stack the book is in, collects the box and takes it to the access point where for the first time it is handled by a human who uses a bar scanner to locate the book and take it out of the box. The box is then sent electronically to a vacant spot in the stacks. Books can be ordered online from another library in the university or from another library in the country and sent to the Hunt for collection. Then we went on a full tour of the new library and saw how they had only one traditional area for study but other areas for open study, collaborative study and digital study groups.

Off to lunch at the Tuscan Blue Restaurant in the Warehouse District. An Italian meal in the company of most of the Raleigh group. Following lunch we walked to the Videri Chocolate Factory where we were inundated with the smells and tastes of the many varieties of chocolate being made on premises before being taken to our homes.

Our evening dinner was spent with our hostess, it was one of the arranged dinners where we combined with some of their members. It was a memorable dinner, much fun and laughter ensued.
The day was dependent on the rain factor and true to our good luck it was fine. We started with a walk through the beautiful University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill. The buildings of both dormitory and actual university type were just magnificent with brick being the dominant feature. Obviously there is no earthquake worry here. We had a very informative trip through the buildings and the park-like grounds lead by the ED Mike Rakouskas who had attended the university.

One of the features of this University are the historic Murals in the School of Government. The paintings depicted the history of the Americas from the early 16th through to 18th century. One could spend a lot of time observing the various happenings through those tumultuous times.

This was followed by a visit to the UNC Basketball Museum. For those that follow basketball this museum has the same importance and shrine for those that visit the Rugby Museum in Palmerston North. We saw the biggest pair of basketball boots I have ever seen - size 22 if I remember rightly, worn by one of their local baseball heroes. It is also the shrine for Dean Dome who was the coach of the UNC for 20 years who successive players had clearly worshiped.

Following lunch in our own small groups of ambassadors and hosts, we went to the Research Triangle Park presentation given by Abby Gingrich. This Research Park is spread over 7,000 acres with 50,000 workers, 10,000 contractors and with 250 companies involved. The buildings in the Park took 8 years to build as interest had to be gained from companies as they saw the value of research into their products. It was explained to us that Raleigh’s original economy was built on the growing or making or exporting of furniture, tobacco and textiles. Quite a wide diversification. However tobacco is being reduced as the world cuts down on tobacco consumption and the cutting down of forests are causing concern with furniture making. Many basic factories have closed. It was very interesting information to be given.

Our group spent time in a huge grocery store which had a combination of speciality foods and household goods, before heading back to the home of our hosts. Most ambassadors took their hosts out for a meal that night. My Host Cherokee Otteson and her two children Laken and Ekan-Hawke went to a very special Waffles and Chicken cafe. You chose the type of waffle, (corn, plain, etc), size of waffle, shape of waffle (heart, round etc) and what sort of chicken (barbequed, steamed etc) to have with the waffle. I had never been to anything like this cafe!! We drove about the 10 miles home and the children and I played cards for the rest of the evening.
Thursday 29 September  

Raleigh  

Rhondda Harris  

The day is overcast but warm. Jill and I along with hosts Carol and Mike Winner travelled to Durham for a history day.

In 1849 Dr Bartlett Durham, for whom the city is named, provided land for a railroad depot, Durham Station.

We visited the Bennett Place Historical site where in April 1865 two of the Civil War’s most important generals sat down at a farmhouse to negotiate the largest surrender of the war. This farmhouse is now the site of Bennett Place, a state historic site open year round. We enjoyed a guided tour through the grounds to the reconstructed and restored farmhouse and learned about life for typical farmers at the time. (A few drops of rain)

Overview and Tour of America Tobacco Complex – (founded by Washington Duke’s son James Buchanan Duke). The former Lucky Strike cigarette factory and former headquarters of the American Tobacco Company transformed into 1 million sq ft district and one of the most ambitious largest and farthest-reaching historic preservation and renovation projects in the history of North Carolina. It includes restaurants, shops and an amphitheatre. It has a culturally rich outdoor venue with seating for more than 10,000 and hostis live performances, events and receptions. The Durham Bulls play here and their mascot a very BIG bull billboard states if you strike the Bull you get a steak, if you strike the grass you get a salad!

Tuna salad was my lunch which I enjoyed as a small serving!

Duke Homestead State Historical Site...much of Durham’s history can be traced back to one man whose name is written all over Durham: Washington Duke. Duke became growing tobacco in 1859, but only a few years later he was conscripted into the Confederate Army. He was captured as a prisoner of war and at war’s end walked home with only 50 cents in his pocket. He began to grow and manufacture as the taste for his tobacco was very popular. We toured his home, the outbuildings where the tobacco leaf was processed, and an excellent museum.
Friday 30 September

Our day host, Doyle Long, drove Rhondda and me to the largest Urban Blue Grass Festival in the world. We wandered along streets lined with kiosks offering tempting food and interesting art and craft, and at the Outdoor Pursuit Centre we climbed into the raft, then sat under hot sunshine listening to great music. We only had two hours there before our hosts Carol & Mike Winner whisked us off to Pullen Park, where we rode on the Classic Wood Carousel built in 1900. It contains 52 hand-carved bass wood animals and 18 large gilded mirrors, and the Wurlitzer organ played nostalgic music. We then rode around the park on a miniature railway train, being children again!

Our farewell BBQ was held in a picnic shelter. Our musicians Reg & Rob led our singing and poi dancing which our hosts seemed to enjoy. It was a fitting end to our Raleigh exchange.

Saturday 1 October

Barbara, who home-hosted Jan and me, provided breakfast consisting of cereal with blueberries and melon pieces, donuts and coffee.

After packing our bags in preparation for our move from Raleigh to Quebec, we went out to the "Cedar Creek Gallery" where there was a garden full of pottery, colourful glasswork and woodwork displays and crafts people demonstrating their creative skills. Several members of our group congregated to sit in the sunshine to eat lunch cooked in the City Street Foodtruck.

Later on we returned to Barbara's home where we had afternoon tea sitting on her sundeck eating Pecan pie. Then, with luggage stacked in the boot of the car, we drove into Raleigh to have our last shared dinner together.

Because of the very early flights scheduled for next morning, all our members slept in Raleigh's Airport Hotel. We set our alarm clocks to wake us up at 3 a.m. next morning in order to get up to catch onward flights via Toronto to Quebec City which was the destination of our next week's Friendship Force Clubs' hosting programme.
We left the hotel where we stayed in Raleigh early (4:00am!) for our flight to Toronto and onto Quebec – we were looking forward to Canada. The flights were uneventful but the descent into Quebec airport was spectacular with the autumn colours.

We were met by our Hosts at the airport and driven to the Welcome lunch held at the “Café Roreke” where we were welcomed by the ED André and members of the Quebec FF club.

After much wine & food (typical French hospitality) we were taken to visit a traditional Huron site (Canadian Indians, who are referred to as the “People of the First Nations”), where we were shown around a typical old Indian village and a wonderful shop with no Taxes!

On our way to our host’s home we were shown around “Wendake” the area that is run by the First nation people and a very stylish hotel.

We then had a wonderful dinner with our hosts Louie & Nicole.

Enjoying lunch at Parliament Buildings

The glorious Citadel
Our full day began with a visit to the Cranberry Interpretation Center in Saint-Louis-de-Blandford where we learned all about the red fruit’s production and were able to taste various products derived from cranberries. We then rode around the bogs in a tractor-pulled wagon from which we viewed the berries being harvested by a most unique water method.

Following lunch, we drove to Sainte-Eulalie, where we visited the crystal gardens of Jardins de Cristal. We were welcomed by Madam Louiselle who explained her work with the crystal medium. After exploring the rooms full of crystal and light, we toured her gardens and then attended a quartz crystal vessel concert.

Our day was completed by a visit to the Cidrerie et Vergers at St. Nicolas (on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River opposite Quebec City). We met Patricia Daigneault who told us the history of the Cidrerie and of cider making in Quebec. She explained that she and her husband, in 1977, acquired the property which contained a 90 year old apple orchard. Her story of how they ultimately prevailed in establishing their cider business was fascinating. Following a personal tour of their operation, we were treated to a cider tasting (“dégustation”) and a dinner of crêpes with cider accompaniment.

The historic district of Old Quebec was a treat today. Our day began with a tour of the Citadelle of Quebec, an active military installation and official residence of both the Canadian Monarch and the Governor General of Canada. Vanessa, our guide, gave us a very informative tour.

At noon, the firing of the cannon was our dinner bell. Our delicious lunch, at the Mess of the Warrant Officers and Sergeants, came complete with china, crystal and a slice of "Distinguished Maple Cake."

A ride on The Funicular took us to a magical European neighbourhood with narrow cobblestone streets flanked with boutiques, souvenir shops and cafes for our afternoon tea and coffee.
From Levi, a short ferry ride across the St. Lawrence River, we had beautiful views of old Quebec City and the famous grand hotel, the Chateau Frontenac.

And the winner of the not-so-coveted wooden spoon goes to: Marjolayne, who scared ED husband, Andre Cauchy, and ambassadors Rhondda and Debbie by going the wrong way on a one way street!

The European neighbourhood of Quebec

Thursday 6 October  
Quebec City  
Reg Clothier

We started with a history lesson on the area around the bridge before embarking on a walk along the River Jacques-Cartier. It was great getting up close and personal with the vibrant colours of Fall.

On our way to Domaine des 3 Moulons (vineyard) we saw some terrific ‘Halloween’ displays by the side of the road.

We started our visit at the vineyard with samplings of their signature wines, and after our picnic lunch we were taken on a guided tour of the cellar.

The vibrant colours of Fall

Cap Sante, our next stop included a visit to a historic church, the dock and a walking tour of the very charming village with a history dating back to the earliest French settlers. Also Marcelle, our ED for the day’s childhood playground.

A short drive from Cap Sante was Pont-Rouge and a visit at the very historic inn/ museum by the River Jacques-Cartier where travellers used to stop to rest and anglers would come to fish.

After a very long day, we finally returned to our lovely host, Genevieve, who had invited her sister-in-law Patrizia for dinner. We had a delightful evening with some interesting discussions.

‘The Three Bears chairs?’
We went to the Cap Tourmente National Wildlife area, located on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. It is a critical habitat for the greater snow goose during migration in the Spring and Fall where they stop over to feed on the bulrushes. We were very fortunate to see thousands of these beautiful birds feeding on the banks of the river.

After a picnic lunch, we left about 1.30 pm to visit the shrine of St. Anne-de-Beaupré, one of the oldest pilgrimage sites in North America at 350 years old. It has been credited by the Catholic Church with many miracles of curing the sick and disabled and the paintings that adorned the walls throughout this beautiful church attest to that tradition.

Our next destination was the Orleans Island where farming and all forms of agriculture thrive year round. We enjoyed the most luscious strawberries straight from the grower by the side of the road. We stopped at a winery and sampled some cassis liquor before heading off to our dinner venue, the Sugar Shack. We learnt how maple syrup was collected and processed and how to make taffy. After a wonderful meal of pea soup, ham, meat pie and fruit tart accompanied by entertainment provided by a musician amidst great hilarity, we proceeded outdoors to be treated to some taffy under the stars.

Another fantastic day!

Christine won the spoon-playing competition at the Sugar Shack!
An easy start to the day, with a walk through a suburban forest path, luckily returning before rain.

Around 2pm we picked up Diana and set off across farmland towards Marcelles country home in the village of Saint Marguerite. We passed a number of farm buildings which the animals live in during the winter.

We had a wonderful farewell party in a huge barn behind the house. A spit roast pig, lamb, and turkey was cooking beneath the barn. We had a competition decorating pumpkins, the host club performed an historical play, and our musicians led the singing. It rained heavily during the party, but stopped when we went to our cars. (Editor’s note: The French tradition of hanging rosary beads on the clothesline to guarantee a fine day didn’t work so well this time!)
A crisp fine morning. We gathered at 8am for farewells before boarding the bus for the trip to Montreal. Much animated conversation on the bus, then a welcome stop at “St Huberts Express”, McDonalds.

On arrival at Montreal we did a very brief tour past city buildings, before arriving at our Hotel. Five of us had lunch at Subway, then Diana, Dorothy & I walked up Mount Real which rises above the city. (Thus the city name Montreal). It was very crowded as it was a holiday weekend.

After weeks trying to get close up views of squirrels, one stood right in front of us and seemed to be asking for food.

Others in our group visited the riverside features. In the evening I accompanied 12 females to dinner at a pub.

W e departed by our own private bus at 8.00am from the Novotel Montreal Centre heading for the Hartford CT Union Bus Station where we were to be met by the Hartford Friendship Force and the third week of our exchange. The day was quite chilly as we left but warmed up as the day went on. We had a bit of a hold up at the Canadian-American border but we were soon on our way with nothing extra to pay.

Thanks to our Alabama ambassador Rob Kilpatrick we took the ‘low road’ to Hartford and went by the scenic route through Vermont and Massachusetts to Hartford. The colours of the changing autumn trees were not as intense as they had been in Quebec but it was a very pretty drive all day. We stopped at a typical American diner for lunch. It was a national holiday and I think the diners got quite a surprise to find a bus load of New Zealand tourists descend on their tranquil spot!!

We arrived in Hartford to a slight traffic jam, but got to the bus station just in time for Debbie Lattey and Diana Bradshaw to dash and catch their 5.00pm coach to New York, for Debbie to head home through San Francisco and Diana to spend holiday time with relatives. We departed with our hosts for an evening meal and a well-earned early night.
Due to our host Duffy, who got us lost, we went to the Connecticut General Assembly building and not the Legislative office building where the tour was meant to start. As a result we missed the organised tour but did a self-tour of the general assembly and caught up with the other ambassadors at lunch in the Legislative office cafeteria.

After lunch we again GOT LOST and had to ask a Blind man and his guide dog directions, as a consequence I had to give myself the “Wooden Spoon”!

We finally found the Home and museum of wonderful “Mark Twain”. This home is a three storied brick mansion with fine antique furnishings set out just as it was back at the turn of the 19th century when Samuel Langhorne Clemens lived there.

After the tour we somehow managed to find our way home for our evening meal with our hosts.
A relaxed start, welcome after the two previous busy exchange visits.

Bruce took us with Jan and Joyce to the West Barn Mall in late morning, then back to our hosts for a Pea & Ham soup lunch.

After lunch we all met at the Charter Oak landing on the Connecticut River for a river cruise. Upstream then downstream. As we passed through the city we received a commentary about the buildings and bridges.

Lower down the river we turned into a wide bay. The centre piece of the Bay was a very old import/export warehouse. Nowadays the Bay is for a boat marina, and walkers.

In the evening we took our hosts out for dinner.

We arrived at historic Wethersfield, a town dedicated to preserving its New England heritage. We toured three homes that had belonged to early pioneers of the town. The guide was not only very knowledgeable but made the past come alive with her commentary.

After lunch at Lucky Lou’s across the road, we went on a walking tour of old Wethersfield. There are many homes here that predate the civil war, some going back 375 years. Our last stop was a maritime warehouse that was once part of a thriving commercial centre. The warehouse contains reminders of the West Indies trade that flourished in Wethersfield from 1650 to 1830. Merchants exported lumber, grain, onions, salted beef, fish and pork in exchange for salt, sugar, molasses and rum from the Caribbean.

In the evening we were hosted by a lovely couple, George and Kathy Swenson at their home. Graham and Theresa Tufnail and their hosts were there too. Dinner was a three-course meal cooked with love. It was an enjoyable evening!
“Free day to spend with your hosts” was the programme entry for this day. Christine, Sue and I were staying with an amazing lady who was due to leave the US two days after our departure to spend time at an orphanage in Honduras. She has been supporting this for many years, and visits 3 times a year raising funds for an “outfit” of clothes for every one of the 40+ children by making and selling soups and sauces and countless different types of jams and marmalades. There also delicious cookies!

We had previously helped her by loading many boxes of her soups and jams into her car for sale at the farmer’s market and church stall. We had also spent an afternoon sorting and labelling piles of clothes during which it was very clear that she knew and loved the personalities of every child.

We were very happy, therefore, to spend the Friday with Joyce and her host, visiting Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Centre. The museum opened in August 1998 and is owned and operated by the Pequot people (as is a nearby casino and associated buildings) It is a 308,000 square foot complex with a 320 seat auditorium, an 18 storey viewing tower (yes, we went up!) life sized dioramas and an amazing 16th century village with full sized extremely life-like villagers (think Peter Jackson!) All figures are cast from native American people with all clothing, wigwams, ornamentation, dugout canoes etc. created by native crafts people.

We were also impressed by the 30 minute video on the tragic 1637 war when 1,500 Pequot people were killed or enslaved by the British at Mystic Fort. The many other smaller exhibitions were of so much interest and of such quality that we ended up spending the entire day there and later recommended to our hosts that this visit be included in future programmes.

That evening we attended a local theatre production with our host and her friends. It was an interesting play, although the three of us felt that it would have benefitted by being cut to less than three and a half hours! We were, however, really pleased that we had accepted the invitation to experience another aspect of life in Hartford!
Hartford

Saturday 15 October

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arley & Jan Bennet drove us to the Gouveia Vineyard, Wallingford, for wine tasting and pizza lunch before the Portuguese owner told us of his production on 140 acres which is sold only from his restaurant.

Harley eventually found a Friendly Ice Cream Parlour, where we enjoyed our icecream parfait, of 1 scoop of black raspberry and 1 scoop of pistachio flavour covered in chocolate fudge and peanut butter sauces. Cream and a cherry on top completed this delicious bargain delight at $4.95.

Drove past the famous Yale University and Wonsley Concert Hall to Guilford beach, watched fishers trying to catch stripers. The coloured Fall trees were beautiful in Sleeping Giant Park, and pink rock faces glistened in the evening sun.

At Trinity Episcopal Parish Church we ate our farewell dinner and listened and danced to enthusiastic accordion player Italian San Basile. After our poi dance we gave the pois to our hosts.

Harley, Judith, Jude and Jill (with prospective members)
Today being Sunday, my host Sandy took me to church. Lovely old Episcopal Church with an equally old congregation, nobody under 65 but they were all very welcoming even if a couple of old dears didn’t know were NZ was but they did mention it had snakes and aborigines!

Lunch at home then off with Sandy to the Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art. This is the first public art museum in the United States. We were given a tour of the museum highlights by a very knowledgeable docent then left to view at our leisure. Amazing museum and there wasn’t enough time to view it all. My favourite was Jeremias Ritter’s Nautilus Cup.

Our farewell party was at Trinity Church, Wethersfield. We were greeted by our host Friendship Force members and enjoyed a generous dinner of barbecued meats, salads and dessert.

We thanked them in song and poi displays then gave our hosts the opportunity to try their hand at using the pois. What fun after a very enjoyable week.
On our way to New York on the train on 17th October. Five of us headed to New York and the other travellers left for many other places.

The train trip was very fast and smooth. Travelling by train you see so many things that you don’t see whilst in a car.

Arriving New York for three days - WOW - so big, many, many people, millions of cars and taxis and too many things to do in such a short time!