

IFYE to Italy defies stereotypes

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ

LEBANON — The people of this grumpy boot-shaped peninsula — bulging with history and jetting out so daringly into the adored Mediterranean Sea — have adopted a 'one-day-at-a-time' philosophy, oblivious to the American version of the 'rat race.' They take lunch breaks from noon till 3 p.m., they visit each other hour upon hour, and they appreciate not only the taste of good food, but also the quantity of their epicurian treasures.

Sound like Utopia?

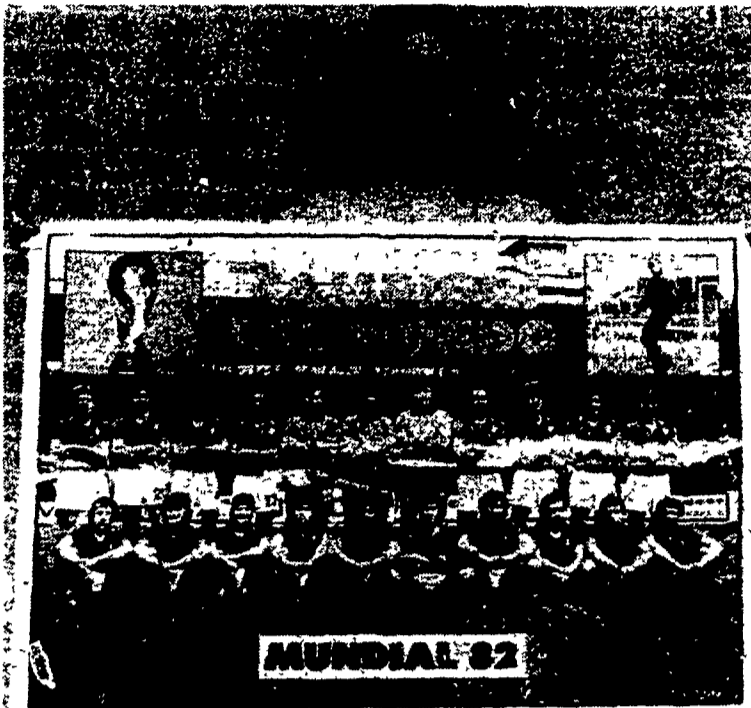
Perhaps to the natives it borders on a 'perfect world,' but to Americans, it's known simply as Italy, home of the Romans, of earthquakes, of spicy food and speeded language and talking hands.

But one American recently got to challenge the stereotypical notions that still live 'in the states,' by spending six months living and traveling in Italy.

Deb Kreider, daughter of Homer and Faye Kreider of R4 Lebanon, says Italy was her second choice when she completed the application for the International Foreign Youth Exchange program. But now, she already has plans to return to Italy in August of 1984, and, she made this decision before returning home.

Deb, a member of 4-H for almost ten years, studied such projects as flowers, photography and gardening. But her first love is traveling. So, about a year ago, when she heard another IFYE describe her experience in Trinidad-Tobago, she "told my mom, 'I think I'm going to try for it.'"

With a pen pal in Austria and two trips to Europe already entered in her book of experiences, she set out for 'romantic' Italy with its over 57 million people all squeezed into a region slightly larger than Arizona.



As a youth exchangee to Italy for six months, Deb Kreider of R4 Lebanon had opportunity to watch that country's soccer team capture the World Cup. Back home, Deb plans to begin her new job and perhaps attend the annual IFYE meeting scheduled for Friday evening of Farm Show week.

From the start, Deb says she knew not to expect the stereotypes, perhaps because she already learned how erroneous these preconceived notions can be from her trip to Austria and Greece.

"I went not expecting a lot, so I got a lot out of it," she says matter-of-factly.

Because the United States' 4-H program can be equated to Italy's 3-P program — a program honoring progress, produce and (im)prove which caters to the agricultural world — she was exposed to several types of farming while there. She stayed with eight families throughout Italy; Each family being quite a distance from the one before, thus allowing Deb to travel almost all of Italy's 708 miles of length.

Her first family was dairy farmers in the north central province of Brescia, raising about 50 Holsteins. It was here Deb says she learned how to speak Italian in a hurry — only one member of the family spoke English.

Her second family raised cash crops of wheat, corn and sugar beets, and one brother sold Northrup King Seed Corn, a fact which delighted Deb.

Having been introduced to the country through an orientation period in Rome, located in central Italy, Deb learned that the people of the north lived much better than their southern friends.

"The northern people were much wealthier overall. When they found out I had to stay with families in the south, they would always try to warn me of what I would see and the people I would meet," she says.

Her third host family was located near central Italy and owned a fruit farm. Deb picked pears here.

Moving south, Deb's fourth family raised beef cattle, and the fifth grew vegetables and corn. She also encountered her first grapes vines here.

"The family knew Americans all thought they still stomped grapes with their feet, so they dug out the equipment and let me do it. And no, I didn't wash my feet first," she laughs.

Though she says grape stomping is now outdated in Italy, she readily admits that families making enough wine for their own consumption will still use the old methods.

Her sixth family was located in the sole of the boot which forms Italy, in the province of Catanzaro. This family grew only a few olive trees.

From Catanzaro, she journeyed to the island of Sicily, west of the main land. Having been warned jokingly by her northern friends that the Mafia might get her, she found the experience refreshing

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Because Italians know that Americans think wine is still made by stomping with bare feet, they specially set this bin up for Deb to test her talent. Deb laughingly adds that, no, she didn't wash her feet first. She probably will tell of this experience during the several presentations she is scheduled to give in the next couple months.



The 4-H program can easily be equated with Italy's 3-P program, a group of clubs catering to the farming world. Therefore, Deb's stay in Italy included eight farms. The upper left photo shows a farmer baling hay with a Same (saw-may) tractor. Right shows how they build their muscles loading hay. Lower left photo is at a cattle sale. Deb says after much banter back and forth, the owner and buyer shake hands in agreement. Below is a family in their lettuce field. The women, traditionally, always wear dresses.

