



This team exchanged ideas during a summer stay in Poland and came away with lasting friendships. From left, kneeling, are Ralph McLaughlin, Gerald Boyd, and Neil Wenger. Standing from left are Vonnie McLaughlin, Connie Rutt, Amy Strickler, and Mandy Dagen.

Poland No Longer Considered Foreign Country By 4-H Exchange Team

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.)

— A different culture did not prevent close bonding of friendships between four county 4-H'ers and their Polish peers.

This summer, four county 4-H members and three 4-H leaders spent three weeks in Poland as part of an exchange of ideas at the first Polish International 4-H Camp held in Swornegacie.

"The first night 4-H members from Poland, Hungary, Latvia, and the U.S. each huddled in their own little groups, but by the second day, the groups were so interspersed that you couldn't tell who came from where," said Connie Rutt, who led the Polish exchange trip.

It was Rutt's fourth trip to Poland. For her, it was exciting to see the growth of the 4-H program that she helped establish in the previously Communist-controlled country. But, for the four county 4-H members, this visit was their first visit outside the states, although 11 Polish youth did spend a few weeks here last summer.

"I was a bit leary," said 17-year-old Gerald Boyd, son of Kerry and Deb Boyd of Ephrata. "But it turned out much better than I expected."

Gerald was particularly impressed by the family relationships in Poland.

"Families are much more important in Poland than here," he said. "Most families have only two children, but their grandparents live in the same house and everyone gets along."

Each 4-H member stayed with a different Polish family. Neil Wenger, the 17-year-old son of Nelson and Alma Wenger from Manheim, stayed on a farm and pitched in with the farm chores. Because Neil lives on a dairy farm he couldn't help but compare the differences in agricultural practices.

One of the most glaring differences is the way milk is handled. In

Poland, the milk sat without refrigeration in the barn for two days. Some was then bought in, boiled, cooled down, and the family members drank it hot or warm. The leftover milk was set at the end of the lane — again without refrigeration — and later picked up (supposedly) by a milk processor.

Needless to say, the Americans did not desire to drink milk, but they did find much of the food to their liking.

"We ate constantly," said Amanda Dagen, daughter of Ed and Tina Dagen.

Mandy, as she prefers to be called, said that sauerkraut and potatoes in addition to other foods were served every day in the home in which she stayed. Unlike the other members, Mandy was offered Coco Puffs and cornflakes, which she declined in favor of a typical Polish breakfast that included cheese, bread, cucumbers, and tomatoes. She was constantly offered warm Coke, hot tea, and some type of fruit drink.

But the most glaring difference between the teens, Mandy said, was their lack of fashion consciousness.

"They didn't seem to be concerned with wearing plaids, flowered shirts or whatever together. And it was common for them to wear the same clothes several days in a row," Mandy said.

She suspects that the lack of money in Poland accounts for the lackadaisical attitude about clothing.

Feeling guilty about the many clothes packed into her suitcase, Mandy didn't wear all that she had packed. But when one of the Polish teens saw Mandy's packed suitcase, she kept exclaiming, "So many clothes... so many clothes..."

"When I left, I gave my jeans shirt to the girl that I stayed with and she seemed really proud of it," Mandy said.

The team did examine the prices for clothing in Polish stores and

discovered that a pair of Levi jeans cost about \$100 in American money — a prohibitive amount for the Polish economy.

The county teens were also impressed with how much the Polish teens knew about American government.

"They knew more than we did," she said.

"The pride in being Polish impressed me," Neil said. "The people really hold on to their history. Everything is rebuilt like it was before it was destroyed by the Communists."

Since Connie's first visit to Poland, she said that there has been lots of rebuilding. She is impressed that 33 out of 49 provinces have established a 4-H program. At this point, the 4-H program is government-run. Rutt said her message to them is that they must get volunteers to help with the program. But volunteerism is greeted with skepticism. Because of the previous Communist control, Polish people are very skeptical of ulterior motives and can't fathom why people would volunteer unless they have a hidden agenda.

The smallness of Polish cars caused a problem for Gerald, who had a difficult time fitting his 6-foot 2-inch frame into the cars, but it was the speed that terrified Mandy.

While most Polish drive fast and erratically, it seemed Mandy's host drove the fastest at an average of 85 mph.

She wanted to wear a seat belt but her host family insisted she not wear one because it wasn't required while riding in the back seat. Nonetheless, Mandy tried to dig one out from where it was hidden in the crevices but couldn't.

Amy Strickler, daughter of Sam and Dottie Strickler of Quarryville, celebrated her 16th birthday while in Poland. She was surprised and delighted with a Polish birthday cake made with Jell-O, peach-

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