



Tessa Slifco, Berlin, sits by a flower bed planted in a tree stump in the Berlin Community Grove. In July, as a delegate for the International 4-H/Japanese Exchange, she will fly to Japan.

International 4-H Exchange Delegate Nervous But Excited About Trip To Japan

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Somerset Co. Correspondent
BERLIN (Somerset Co.) — "I'm excited, nervous, anxious — afraid of the plane ride," admitted 14-year old Tessa Slifco who, while spending the summer in Japan, will celebrate her 15th birthday.

The daughter of Edward and Stephanie Slifco, Tessa, a delegate, was accepted for the International 4-H/Japanese Exchange by the Pennsylvania State University. On July 14, she will depart from Pennsylvania, returning on August 12.

Her acceptance finds Tessa a significant figure in Somerset County 4-H, considering — besides being the only county representative in the 1997 exchange — the teenager breaks a 30-year gap wherein no local 4-H representative has gone to Japan. In fact, 10 years have elapsed since the county has had an international exchange representative.

History, culture, mastery of chopsticks, accepting for a few weeks, new culture and a new family as her own, are thoughts that send Tessa's tummy into a topsy-turvy state.

Her mother, however, says that being an only child has turned her daughter into a people person who absolutely thrives with the bigger families of her friends.

Tessa, therefore, believes her host family — parents and three children — promises to be a pretty super group.

Tessa's own chopsticks — a gift from the Japanese girl she hosted last summer — she is taking along, certain that, with practice, she will learn to consume an entire meal with them and so satisfy her hunger.

"I wouldn't say I have mastered chopsticks," she said with an impish grin.

The parents in her host family are a systems engineer and a school teacher, a fact that surprised Tessa's family. They later contemplated whether two professionals in one household is the usual thing in Japan.

Another exciting tidbit Tessa was delighted to learn, is that her host sister loves the same things

she does — sports, singing, and listening to music.

At Berlin-Brothersvalley High School, Tessa, a sophomore, plays varsity softball and volleyball. A whip, also, in academics, she manages to retain a position high on her school's honor roll.

Besides the forensics team and representing at states the Future Business Leaders of America, outside of school Tessa plays in community softball and volleyball leagues, the Somerset County Community Band, and actively supports St. Gregory's Roman Catholic Church in MacDonalton.

In the Valley 4-H she has competed in bowling, volleyball, public speaking, food and fashion revues, and demonstration contests. She has square danced at the farm show, a popular event enjoyed by many of her fellow county 4-Hers.

Marge Jano, Tessa's grandmother, isn't about to neglect the exciting plans necessary for her granddaughter's cross-continental experience.

Already, the former airline reservationist, who once worked at a Cleveland, Ohio, airport and knows the woes that can beset travelers, has thought ahead to Tessa surviving the O'Hare International Airport maze in Chicago.

Mrs. Jano, weeks ago, contacted a relative who lives in the airport's proximity. She will be there when Tessa's flight arrives from Pittsburgh and will send her on to San Francisco.

And, with the quick-wits God gave to most grandmas, Mrs. Jano, while shopping at her favorite Wal-Mart store, espied matching tee shirts bedecked on the

front with a circle of International flag replicas, which she instantly purchased for Tess, and the 16-year old host sister.

Although, Tessa's mom says it's nigh to unbelievable that Tessa prefers only butter on her pancakes and not maple syrup, Tessa plans to take Somerset County pure maple syrup as a gift for her hosts.

The menu for the meal that she, herself will cook for them, Tessa said, isn't complete, however it's bound to feature the sweet amber commodity from home.

"We are urged to try everything they give us," Tessa said, quoting information from her recent orientation. They also should acknowledge when they don't like a food they have tried.

"Don't pretend to like it if you don't," she said.

Otherwise, if the hosts believe you like it, it will be served many times.

Apparently, it won't be in the shower where Tessa will shampoo her hair, as at home, but probably at a sink. So while the long tresses that reached mid-back had to be sacrificed, Tessa judiciously opted for a practical, above-the-shoulders, haircut for her sojourn in the Orient.

"One thing I am a little worried about," she added, "is where I am there, they (the Japanese people) will be remembering the bombing of Hiroshima."

Tessa will give a personal gift to each of her hosts, including the 13-year-old boy, 8-year-old girl, and parents.

And daily, she will keep a written journal of her life.

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