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President's Message

We had a good turn out and a lot of fun at our Spring Picnic on May 18 at Rock Creek Park (see photo). Our Summer Pool party on July 26 was hosted again by Kathryn Tatko and Jack Richards with much fun and good food (see photo).

We are encouraging club members to arrange special events for our membership. A special event in June provided presentations on how all members can support the goals of Friendship Force by supporting inbound and outbound exchanges, even if they do not have the means to home host. Special emphasis was given to the upcoming inbound from Brazil and the outbound to England. The June meeting was hosted in the home of JB Cox. (see photo)

Our 2014 exchanges were both very successful. Mary Tobin was ED for the outbound exchange to Manchester, UK (Sept. 7-14). Chuck Goldfarb was ED for the inbound exchange from Brazil (Aug. 18-25). Details on these exchanges are in articles included below.

Two of our members (Barbara Macken and Chuck Goldfarb) attended and represented our club at the international FFI conference in New Zealand in Oct 2014. More information will be provided on the results of this conference later.

Our 2015 exchanges are beginning to take shape. We have an outbound to Brazil. Priscilla Landers, ED, and Barbara Greco, co-director, recently sent an email to the club asking for a response from those who might be interested in participating. They provided approximate exchange dates of April 7-27, 2015. There will be approximately a week in each of the following locations: Pica (for which we would join the Harrisburg, PA, FF club), Rio (extension) and Belo Horizonte (for our official assigned week). Please respond to them if you think you might like to participate.

We have an inbound exchange from Tamworth, Australia scheduled for October 2015. I have been in contact with their club president, and I have received offers of help from FFNCA members, but we are still in need of an ED for this inbound exchange. Please contact me if you are able to help out with this. We have also

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coordinated a domestic outbound exchange (long weekend) to return a visit to FF in Fort Worth, TX, for March 20-24. I will be ED for this exchange.

We hope to see you at our activities, especially at our annual brunch meeting on Nov 9. We encourage your participation in our exchanges. All are welcome. The annual meeting is a good time to renew your membership for 2015. Annual membership dues are currently \$30 individual and \$40 family. Membership forms will be available at the meeting.

Thanks to JoAnn Thacker for volunteering to edit and compile this newsletter. Your input will help to make this a success.

In Friendship,
Dorothy Wicker

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Spring picnic; Kathryn and Jack host pool party; June hosting seminar.

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EXCHANGE DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON OUR INBOUND EXCHANGE FROM BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL, AUGUST 18-25, 2014

Chuck's extensive report on the Brazilian inbound exchange focused on our experiment with requesting home host and ambassador exchange evaluations at the end of the exchange. This was a great success in providing feedback that will be helpful in future planning. 12 of the 14 ambassadors submitted evaluations. They were pleased with the week overall and with most activities. Some found the monuments tour too long and tiring, and some thought there was too much time spent driving on our Front Royal day.

Seven home host exchange evaluations were submitted. Our inability to find sufficient Portuguese-speaking interpreters and tour guides was seen as a deficiency by five. There were several complaints that ambassadors were so focused on shopping that there was no time for other free day activities.

Based on the evaluations, Chuck made the following suggestions:

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When we have visitors who do not speak English, it is useful to have activities that require little explanation. Music, in particular, is universal; the two musical events were very highly rated by the ambassadors and truly represented uniquely American culture. We also might consider nature-related activities that do not require much explanation to appreciate, such as Great Falls and the Botanical Gardens.

When we have visitors who do not speak English, and do not have a native language tour guide and thus must rely on one person interpreting the English language presentation of another person, no matter how exciting the subject matter, much is lost. Any presentation should be very short and to the point.

Doing monuments by moonlight on foot is probably not a good idea. Even though the weather was cool for August and the night quite beautiful, it was inevitable that some of the ambassadors would be challenged by a several miles-long walk. We must remember that our club tends to have more walkers than many other clubs and consider alternatives, such as: (1) having a convoy of cars to reduce the amount of walking (though this can be difficult to coordinate given the lack of parking); (2) letting each home host provide the tour or the monuments on a free day, basing the extent of the tour on the interest level and stamina of his/her ambassadors.

The two musical activities DID WORK. We should try to include at least two such musical activities in each exchange. The Library of Congress has frequent free noon-time concerts as do various other organizations; we should research these opportunities.

Everything connected with the Kennedy Center worked, including the meal at Campono across the street. We should try to learn in advance what the performances will be the week of an upcoming exchange and plan the Kennedy Center tour for the day that has the most uniquely American program.

I cannot help but feel that our programs are sometimes a bit skimpy compared to other clubs. In part this is because we are very spread out geographically, so options like meeting for a picnic lunch can be difficult to coordinate. At the same time, we have the good fortune to have many free sights and museums in DC. We also generally find that with potluck contributions from members at our welcome, farewell, and Annapolis/Front Royal events tend not to be very costly. Still, in the past we seem to have cut corners in order to meet a tight budget.

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In reality, we can afford a few splurges, as we did this time with the meal near the Kennedy Center, the Gospel Brunch, and the Museum for Women in the Arts. The finances can be addressed in a few ways. (1) We should seriously consider asking ambassadors to contribute \$175 each unless we have reason to believe the ambassadors are on very tight budgets (as the Thais were). (For this exchange, we requested \$125 per person.) (2) Given that we have funds in the bank, we should make it policy that in our planning we expect to spend as much as \$500 per exchange out of club funds. These additional funds might allow us to solve our transportation problems for the monuments tour.

We had a mix-up at the Farewell Dinner, with some of the hosts' private wine supply accidentally consumed by attendees. We have reimbursed the hosts, but we should take steps to keep this from happening again. At future events, drinks or food that are not intended for consumption at the party should be put away or, if that is not possible, well-marked to inform attendees that they are not for consumption.

Clearly, we have learned much from the evaluation process that will help us in planning our next exchange.

Friendship Force of the National Capital Area: Manchester Outbound Exchange Sep 7 - Sep 14 2014

Ambassadors: Mary Tobin (exchange director), Ken & Betsy Sanford, Barbara and Tom Williams, Dorothy Wicker, J. B. Cox, Carol Kearns, JoAnn Thacker, Kathryn Tatko, John Richards, Henry Gregory, Yarka Bloomberg, Sharon Newman, Christina Campbell, Ernie Stones, and Allan and Marla Farber.

Sunday Sep 7, 2014 the 18 ambassadors representing FFNCA arrived in Manchester to begin the visit. Seven arrived by train from London (five had done an optional pre-exchange visit to London), two rented a car and drove from London, and the remaining arrived by air - directly from the USA. We all arrived with excitement and anticipation of the week ahead. As a first time Exchange Director (ED), I felt special responsibility and was anxious that this would be a successful exchange.

My host Andrew Kelly, also the Exchange Director for Manchester, greeted us at the train station. Andrew was hosting three of us (Henry, myself, and my nephew Ernie). I was relieved to see that he had already picked up Ernie from the airport

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and had him in tow. I was pleasantly surprised that Andrew drove an electric car, which is one of my interests. In the week ahead, I got to experience living with charging stations. We arrived at his home, and I met Andrew's mother Audrey Kelly, who had been very active for many years with the Friendship Force of Greater Manchester. I immediately felt a bond with her as she feeds squirrels and anything that passes through their yard, plus I enjoyed the 3 cats. They even feed the nocturnal hedgehogs, which I looked for every night but they managed to elude me.

Monday - We spent the day with our individual hosts until the Welcome Tea at 3:30 PM at the Altrincham Town Hall where we met other members of their club and enjoyed sandwiches, scones, and other sweets with tea. I love scones and attempted to make them before the trip and will continue the challenge to make some as good as those we had in the UK

Tuesday; Trip to visit York. We met at 9:30 AM at the TRAFFORD shopping Center to meet the hired Coach for the two hour trip to York. Romans built the original city with its walls starting in 71 AD. The Vikings (Danes) captured it in 866 AD and named it JORVIK. Lunch was included in a restaurant housed within a spacious lovely columned building, which would have been great if it had faster service. Following lunch we were taken on a brief tour of the famous York Minster, which is among the largest Gothic cathedrals in the world. Following the cathedral visit, we were on our own to explore York. I took the tour of Jorvik, which is a museum of an ancient Viking Village. Some of the other ambassadors walked on the wall, shopped, tested the local York Pubs etc. A few hours was definitely not enough.

Wednesday: Day with Hosts: Some ambassadors including the three of us staying with Andrew visited Chester, which is another walled city and was founded as a Roman fort in 79 AD. Chester was only about half an hour drive from Manchester. We took this opportunity to walk around and view the city from the Chester wall. We took a break from our walk and had a lovely lunch at one of the Chester Pubs. This may have my vote for Best Pub - certainly best Pub lunch that I enjoyed in the UK.

Thursday: Day trip to Northern Wales: We again met at the Trafford Center and took the hired coach to Wales. Our first stop was the city of Llandudno now the largest seaside resort in Wales. It is built on the side of the Great Orme, which is a great limestone headland which is home to flora and fauna. It is supposed to be home to many wild goats but I only saw sheep. Tourists can go effortlessly to

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the summit by the Tramway or the Cable car. We took the tram up and walked around and enjoyed the view. We got a quick lunch at the Fish& Chips place just across from the Tram - the best I had in the UK. We very briefly enjoyed a short walk along the sea but it was cut short by need to move on to the castle. We then had a tour of the Conway Castle, which is a World Heritage site and fortification from the 13th and 14th centuries. Again we were whisked away too soon to see everything.

Friday: All of our hosts lived in the suburbs of Manchester, and it was not until Friday that we would see and get a walking tour of Manchester City Center led by Andrew Kelly. We met at the Town Hall. Old and new town halls are connected by a pedestrian bridge. The old Town Hall has been used for filming Sherlock Holmes and Downton Abbey for TV, which many of us know and love from PBS. We were taken to see the Hidden Gem Catholic Church and a statue of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln is revered in Manchester because he is attributed to compensating the city for its loss of revenue while a union blockade kept ships carrying Southern cotton from reaching their destination during the American civil war. We learned of significant damage done to the urban center when the IRA set off a bomb in 1996. Fortunately, there was warning so that the city could be evacuated, and there was no loss of life. We saw the oldest pub in Manchester, which has been moved twice, the second time because of the bombing. Our morning tour ended at Manchester Cathedral.

We separated and our hosts took us to different places. After lunch at a Manchester Pub, our group went on to the Science and technology museums. I was interested in seeing the cotton mills exhibits because of family history. Friday night was also our night to take our hosts out for dinner.

Saturday was a day with hosts until our Farewell evening dinner. I was able to visit the area where my Dad had lived when he was 9 years old. In the afternoon, our group visited some museums at Salford University. In the evening the Farewell dinner was held at the Mercure Hotel, Bowdon. Jack Richards did a wonderful job of leading our group in several songs including "Getting to Know You," "America the Beautiful" and "Leaving on a Jet Plane". We didn't have an opportunity to practice and some of us can barely carry a tune (and that may be an exaggeration) but as Audrey Kelly said, the important part is participation. I think they all appreciated our humble contributions to the entertainment.

Sunday our hosts took us to the train or airport to finish the exchange. Eleven ambassadors headed off on an optional post-exchange visit to the Lake District for

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some hiking experiences. Barbara Williams led that part of the trip. One ambassador went to Paris, and others spent more time in the UK.

The ambassadors had individual experiences as their hosts lived in different parts of the Manchester area and were taken to see different sights. Additionally some of the hosts had shared dinner parties, which allowed the ambassadors to meet other hosts.

I had a wonderful time on all three parts of the trip, the pre-trip extension to London, the actual Exchange, and the Lake District. I especially loved Coniston in the Lake District with the beautiful green fields, stone walls, and animals. I think we all found the hosts to be very helpful and friendly, and I believe a number of friendships were made that will continue in the future. I really enjoyed Andrew Kelly and his family. I was pleased to hear that the Sanfords have already had a brief visit from their day hosts from the Manchester exchange. It is ultimately the personal interactions and friendships developed that make the Friendship Force exchanges a success.

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