

It's time to think Blue Jeans and Country Scenes Exchange students experience life in Ione

By Merlyn Robinson

It's time to think "Blue Jeans and Country Scenes," the theme for this year's Morrow County Fair and Rodeo, August 15 through the 19.

Premium books are ready to be picked up at convenient locations throughout the county including post offices, Extension offices, the city library and Kegler's Market in Boardman. Mailing of books was deleted this year to cut expense and provide additional premium money for areas with expanded exhibit categories, fair officials say.

New this year are two days of professional rodeo, August 18 and 19. Local sponsors have contributed over \$7,000 to rodeo purses to attract some top PRCA contestants. The Rodeo Committee has had workdays to update the facilities to accommodate these PRCA shows.

Attendance is expected to be at an all-time high, however, admission to both the fair and rodeo is still a bargain, for the price of a \$12.50 button, chairman Richard Ladd says.

Rodeo events also include a team branding and the traditional Friday night, August 17, Morrow County Amateur rodeo. Highlights of fair week include the Wednesday night

amateur talent contest, Thursday evening's 4-H style review and the 4-H and FFA fat stock auction on Saturday night, August 18.

New this year will be the P.J. Johnson band for the Saturday night street dance at the fairgrounds following the auction sale.

Expanded wash rack facilities have been completed to accommodate livestock washing. And the sheep department now has all-metal pens for the sheep exhibits.

"Doll up those blue jeans and get ready for the Saturday morning parade, August 18 at 10 a.m.," said a fair spokesperson. The Heppner Chamber of Commerce is updating parade categories and there will be ribbons and cash awards for the winning entries.

1st Interstate celebrates 125th

The Heppner branch of the First Interstate Bank will celebrate its 25th anniversary on July 3 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

Come help us celebrate Loree Hubbard's 80th birthday July 7, 2 p.m. at the Ione United Church of Christ basement.

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Renee Van Leersum Anne Morter

At Ione High School this year, students had a chance to expand their knowledge of the world without cracking a book. Two foreign exchange students, Renee Van Leersum from Holland and Fumika Matusui from Japan, spent the school year attending classes with their American counterparts, and everyone came away from the experience a little wiser about the world.

The girls noted many differences between their homes and the United States but they also discovered that they had a lot of things in common with their peers on this side of the world.

First, a bit of background on each girl. Renee, 19, hails from Spijkenisse, a moderate-sized city (for them) of 70,000 people. It is located about 15 miles from Rotterdam, a major city of 600,000. She is the only child of Edo and Mar Van Leersum, a husband and wife team of physical therapists. Her school in Holland had a student body of 1400 but her class had just 100 members. Renee was a senior at Ione High School, meaning that she got to enjoy all the fanfare of the prom, junior-senior banquet, and graduation from a lofty spot. Her year was capped when her parents visited Ione in late May and early June. They arrived in time to attend Renee's graduation (even though it didn't really count) and spend some time seeing the sights of Oregon with their daughter. This was Renee's first trip to the U.S. as well as her folks' first time, but Renee is sure she will return sometime in the near future. Her host family for the year for the year was Mark, Jocelyn and Jace Jones.

Renee's parents had not planned to visit the United States until the Joneses sent them a copy of Ray Atkeson's Oregon III along with an invitation to visit. After comparing the photographs in the book with the pictures Renee had sent, they decided to come see for themselves.

Fumika, 16, comes from Kosaca in the Prefecture (equivalent to our state) of Nagasaki. Her hometown is considerably smaller with just 5500 residents. The town is located near Sasebo, home of a U.S. Navy Base, and it is about an hour and forty-five minutes from Tokyo. She is the youngest of three girls and her parents own a wholesale business that supplies fruit, vegetables, fish and other supplies to various retailers. She attends an all-girls

Christian school with a student body of 800 and her class has about 250 members.

While Fumika and her parents had never visited the U.S. before, she says that one of her sisters was an exchange student several years back so her trip was not completely a new adventure for the family. Fumika has had two host families this year. After arriving last June, she stayed the summer with a family in Portland before coming to Ione for the school year. Her host family here was the Ken Nelson family.

Neither girl was able to specify where she would spend the year. Renee expected to land in a bigger city, mainly because she didn't realize that towns came as small as Ione. Fumika had hoped for a smaller town where she could sidestep the drug and crime problems so common in the larger cities. Even so, Ione had to be somewhat of a shock. Both girls credit their host families for adequately preparing them for their journey to the wide open spaces.

Fumika became acclimated to small town life slowly, visiting during harvest and even getting to ride on a combine. When Renee received an introductory letter from her host "mother," Jocelyn Jones, describing a town of 350 and a school with a student body of 40, she admits to being stunned. After talking it over with her mother, she decided to approach the adventure with an open mind and maybe her trip to the U.S. would be much different than she anticipated. She didn't appear to be overwhelmed by the openness of the country mainly because Jocelyn spent most of the trip from Portland telling the jet-lagged Renee that the beautiful Columbia Gorge scenery would soon end. Abruptly, Fumika admits to being a little wowed by all of the nothing, and all of the sagebrush. Upon her return to Japan, she can not only tell her friends about these strange gray plants that cover the landscape, but she can produce a refrigerator magnet in the shape of Oregon which she made out of sagebrush in a Future Entrepreneur class she took this year.

A big difference for the girls was the schooling system. Due to those differences, their year at Ione High School counted for nothing more than experience for either one. In Holland, a student can work for a four, five or six year diploma and the program can take from 4-8 years, depending on how they progress through the low, medium and high sub-levels. A six-year diploma opens more doors than the other two. It is required to enter a university or military academy. Renee has completed her five-year diploma and has a year to complete upon her return. Her future plans include enrollment in a military academy, which is still somewhat unfamiliar ground for girls, and then a career in civil engineering. Another note on schools in Holland: students must pay to attend school, whether it be public or private. Renee attends a Christian school which costs the same as a public school. She says the Christian schools are known to be more challenging and strict.

Japan's schools are structured much like American schools with a 12-year plan divided into lower grades, junior high and high school. The big difference is that students attend classes Monday through Saturday, and part of their school day is cleaning the school. Fumika will be a junior upon her return, and she plans to go on to college after graduation, possibly with a major in English. She says that classes at home are much tougher and school rules are stricter. Not only is snacking and gum chewing prohibited, but girls cannot wear pierced earrings or have permanents in their hair. At her school, which is also a Christian school, the students wear uniforms.

Both girls enjoyed participating in sports this year. According to Renee, team sports are not offered in school in Holland beyond the basics in P.E. class. To participate,



Left to right: back-Heidi Nelson, Jill Nelson, Fumika Matusui, exchange student from Japan, Julie Nelson. Front row: Alfred, Helen and Ken Nelson.

you join a health club and pay for the privilege. New sports for her this year were volleyball and basketball. She had previous experience on the tennis court and it showed as she advanced to the state tennis tournament representing IHS this past spring. Fumika's school did offer sports which included among others ping pong, badminton, handball and swimming. This year, Fumika played on the volleyball and tennis teams, and acted as manager for the girl's basketball team.

Both girls were surprised at the number of people who drive big cars here. In their countries, gasoline is much more expensive so most people drive small, fuel-efficient cars. Renee says that pickups, station wagons and four-wheel drive rigs are an unusual sight and only rarely would you see an American-made car, it being something of a status symbol. The most common brand of cars in Holland are Volkswagen, Peugeot, Opel, Renault, Nissan, Toyota, Honda and Subaru. She says that the majority of families have just one car but getting around is no trouble with a highly developed mass transportation system.

Fumika says that many families in Japan have two cars, and again, they drive small, mostly Japanese-made autos. She says a status car in Japan is a BMW, Benz or Volvo. A big change for her was that we drive on the opposite side of the road, and our steering wheels are on the "wrong" side of the car. In Holland and Japan, young people must be 18 years old to get a driver's license and they must take special classes to qualify. Renee got her driver's license here, but due to insurance reasons was unable to use it. She was looking forward to a trip to city hall upon her return to trade her Oregon license for a Dutch license.

American food was not unfamiliar to either girl since many of the American chain restaurants are in both of their countries. Renee noted that our eating patterns differ. She said that Americans tend to serve up

bigger portions and eat more food in general, and she also noted that our food tended to be more processed. Her parents observed that it seemed everyone always had a "big gulp" in hand, whether they were walking, driving or whatever. Her parents were shocked at how much Americans snacked during the day since they are used to very set meal and break times. Fumika says that American food is popular in Japan, and in fact she prefers it. Or at least she did before she spent a year without sushi. By the end of her stay, she admitted that she was looking forward to some traditional Japanese food once again.

Both girls felt very welcome in the community and several times commented on how friendly, interested and helpful the people here were. Renee said she soon got used to saying hello to everyone in the post office and waving to everyone on the road. She said if she did this at home, she would not only be exhausted but her fellow Dutchmen might consider her just a little bit crazy.

Fumika admitted that she was a bit taken aback by American's outward display of emotions, coming from a country where the people tend to be conservative and reserved. She said that the Japanese would be aghast at the cheering, screaming and hugging that goes on at a basketball game or other such event.

Both Renee and Fumika have returned to their homes now, taking with them a load of memories along with several new suitcases filled with souvenirs of their year in Oregon. Both girls were getting anxious to get home to see family and get together with friends. Renee said she will remember Ione most for its friendly people and her experience in sports during the year. Fumika's most vivid memory is the state championship in basketball, viewed from her bird's eye seat on the bench as manager.

The big question, is though, do you think their friends will ever believe their stories of this place?

Aquatics fitness class to begin

An aquatic fitness class available through Blue Mountain Community College instructed by Joyce Hughes will begin Monday, July 2. The four-week session will be held on Mondays and Thursdays from 6 to 6:55 p.m. at the Heppner swimming pool. "This is a great way to cool off after a hot day and tone up those

muscles while you're at it," says Hughes. "You don't have to be a swimmer to take the class, you don't even have to get your head wet if you don't want to."

For more information contact Joyce Hughes, 676-9228 or 676-9959.

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