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1. My foremost goal this year was to become fluent in Mandarin. Because of the difficulty of the language and my very basic level competency, I decided it would be best to focus on the language. After completing two semesters worth of language classes and two months of language enrichment (before my Rotary year actually began), I received a certificate of completion from the language center at Tunghai University.

I consider knowing how to speak, read and understand Mandarin a great skill and an achievement. Certainly, there is always more to learn of a language. However, I am able to compete for jobs and think about future career plans with my language abilities in mind. Just last week, I interviewed completely in Chinese for a job was later offered the position. In addition to language classes, I also audited a modern short-story course and an intro psychology course. More than some of my cultural exchanges with Rotary exchanges, these classes allowed me a better understanding of Taiwanese-Chinese thought. What I mean is that by seeing how teachers approach their students and the kinds of moral lessons they incorporate into their teaching and explanations, I feel like I better understand a basic foundation of Chinese culture. Also, at the language center I took a class on Confucius writings, another undeniable basis of Chinese culture.

Aside from the business opportunities connected to China's ever important economy, I believe that by knowing Chinese, I am now connected to another world people. Not only the Chinese living in Taiwan or the mainland, but also the millions of overseas Chinese grouped and scattered around Asia. The Chinese are a diverse ethnic group and Mandarin has influenced nearly ever East Asian country. Because of my experience in Asia and my competency in Mandarin, I plan to pursue Asia regional studies as a career focus (whether in academic study or journalism, the two fields that I am interested in). In college, I had never considered wanting to study Asia or felt very related to Asians. With the support of Rotary, I was able to really delve into the Taiwanese culture and community. Because of Rotary's gracious financial support, I was also able to use my saved college funds to travel around Taiwan and briefly visit some other Asian countries (Vietnam, Malaysia and China). My travels further stoked my interest in the entire region, in addition to Taiwan and China.

As for the next step, I have just decided to take the job that I described earlier, as an editor for community news in an English-language entertainment magazine. My year in Taiwan with Rotary is certainly what allowed me to get this position. The company, based in Beijing and Shanghai, has historically has only offered work to free-lancers and writers already living in those cities. However, I was allowed an exception because of my competency in Mandarin and media experience in Taiwan. Without Rotary's financial support, I would not have had the time to develop either of these professional skills. I plan to use this job as a stepping-stone in a broader journalism career that involves China, Taiwan and Asia.

2. During orientation, one of the speakers talked about the honeymoon stage of traveling, the point when you are in love with your new country and everything seems to get only better. I passed through that stage quickly since I had visited Taiwan the summer of 2006. It was then that I had had my rather intense 'honeymoon period' where I met family members for the first time and started to realize my Chinese roots (and the motivation for my application for the Rotary scholarship the following year).

I believe that having skipped that stage, I have been able to get to know Taiwan on a deeper level and note the country's faults as well as its true virtues—not just the differences that can seem exotic and wonderful. My view of America also includes both the bad and good. After being away for a year, I now appreciate American comforts and values that I had taken for granted all growing up. On the flip side, the more that I understand other cultures and countries, getting to know Taiwanese, Chinese and other foreigners in Taiwan, the more I think Americans could learn others. Great qualities like modesty and strong sense of respect for elders, which I think are rarer in American culture, are considered common etiquette in Asian culture.

Finally, I have encountered instances where locals have given very strong opinions on the U.S. and its international involvement. I have had to tactfully diffuse their opinions while also taking into consideration their views. They offered perspectives on history that I had not considered before. For me, listening to their viewpoints reemphasizes the point that history is not always objective and more than anything, based on perspective. I believe that understanding that concept and being able to look at events from several viewpoints is essential to any attempt at cultural understanding, goodwill and peace.

3. I tried to use my skills to contribute to the university I was assigned to. The international department of Tunghai started a campaign recently to internationalize the university. Part of that is attracting foreign students to their programs. So to help, I interviewed key alumni, professors and department heads about their personal life experiences and accomplishments. I also got their views on the future of Taiwan and the role that their particular industry would play in that future. I wrote these interviews up and submitted them to the school to be used in a profile project, to be posted online. I am not sure whether or not they will use them, but these exchanges were enlightening and informed my perspective of Taiwan and its future.
4. I have talked about Rotary to nearly everybody I know. After I received notification that I had gotten the fellowship last October, I advised a good friend of mine to put in an application. He was also rewarded a three-month scholarship to go to South America. In Taiwan, people often ask me what I am doing here. I describe the scholarship, what the scholarship covers, what the responsibilities are, and how to get started on the application. I always encourage people to apply and to get in touch with their local Rotary Club. I tell them that Rotarians are known to be incredibly friendly and helpful. If you've got an idea or a real passion to go somewhere, a Rotary club will do everything they can to help you realize those goals.
5. The orientation conference was a great experience. I was excited and geared up to go after attending (too bad I still had another six months and college to finish up before I could leave). The training was informative. Though a lot of the students there may have spent time abroad before, myself included, the travel information and tips provided were new and very helpful. The speakers were obviously successful ambassadors. Their excitement and genuine appreciation of their own experiences was apparent. That excitement was then translated to us.

During the orientation there was also an atmosphere of social connection and networking. I guess because Rotary is essentially a social network for business men and women, and community leaders, this tone was translated to the scholars as well. My only recommendation is that there be more time for the scholars to interact, another half day or so. With that, perhaps scholars can come together after their years abroad and combine ideas or work together on new projects for international understanding. Probably, the thing that Rotary lacks is a strong social network of ambassadorial scholars after they have returned. Considering the wealth of experiences and excellent students or beginning career-persons that are Rotary ambassadors, this seems like an opportunity-lost.
6. My advice for incoming scholars is to be flexible. The purpose of having an abroad-experience is to see and learn things you did not expect. So don't anticipate or try to force your experience to be a particular way.

However, it is important to spend your time how you wish to spend it. A year in a place is not long and your time outside of Rotary commitments and classes is limited. In a given country, there are a million different types of people who are living their lives according to different philosophies. You will also encounter a good number of foreigners like yourself, who are also there for an international experience. However, you should keep in mind that how they allot their time is not necessarily how you should. For example, at Tunghai University a lot of my classmates were exchange students from Japan or Korea. For them, this was their first time abroad and away from home. This was their time to travel and have as many experiences and as much fun as possible. Certainly, you should not rest and should fill your time with as many fascinating and exciting experiences as possible. However, I think that a Rotary Ambassadorial scholar has a different set of responsibilities from the average exchange student. You are required to pursue a study plan and you have obligations to visit and present at local Rotary Clubs at least ten times, which is actually pretty time consuming considering planning and contacting the clubs.

In my experience, I found that I often did things differently from the other foreign students here. Having already graduated college, and studied abroad twice my goals in Taiwan were more to develop my language skills and a deep understanding of the culture and current issues here. I wanted to study Chinese well, I wanted to travel, and I wanted to spend my time with good people that I felt like I could relate to. Most importantly, I wanted to be learning all the time about Taiwan and its history and culture.

My advice would be to have a clear set of goals of what you want to achieve from this experience and start working toward those from day one. However, being flexible is important since the point of this experience is to broaden and enhance your international understanding. To do that, you have to be open to new experiences and ideas.

7. I will continue to stay involved with Rotary by keeping in touch with the friends and contacts that I have made. I will continue encouraging students or anyone in a community to get involved with Rotary. I truly believe it is a great organization and hope to become a Rotary Club member in the future.

**Please return this form and your Final Report to your scholarship coordinator at The Rotary Foundation.**

Name: Mary Lily Kuo

1. How did you first learn about The Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarships program? (b) Friend
2. Reason for applying:
  3. Did you attend a predeparture orientation seminar organized by your sponsor Rotarians? (a) No.
  4. Did you attend an inbound scholars orientation semi-nar in your host district? (a) Yes in High Point with about 30 scholars in attendance.
  5. Please list the approximate number of times during your scholarship year that you visited: (a) A Rotary club or (b) Another group where you either gave an address or were identified as a Rotary Scholar.
  6. Please indicate for what types of expenses you used your contingency fund/books and supplies allocation, and the approximate amount spent in each category (Academic-Year and Cultural Scholars only):
    - (a) Textbooks: 2 text books in the summer (about 500 NT each including cds) for total of 1000 NT. 4 books 1<sup>st</sup> semester at 5000 NT total, 4 books second semester plus extra material for audited classes was about 6000 NT. Total: 12, 000 NT.
    - (b) Supplies- not more than 2000 NT for the year.
    - (c) Predeparture expenses (e.g., applica-tions, visa, telephone/faxes, inocula-tions, etc.)- about 175 USD for vaccinations, total visa fees were a little over 200 USD (for multiple entry, one week processing. Includes costs for pictures, mailing material and transportation to embassy)
    - (d) Rotary-related ambassadorial expenses (e.g., visual aids, transportation to meetings) (e) Other (please specify): 5000 NT for all presentation transportation costs.Other: cell phone- approximately 700 NT a month for 9 months for the academic year and two months additional language study for a total of 7700 NT  
Gym membership, one year membership for 460 USD.  
Digital camera- 100 USD
  7. When will you return to your sponsor district to ful-fill your post-scholarship responsibilities? (b) One year after completion of the scholarship period (with Trustee approval). I am leaving directly for China to start working. I would like to complete my post-scholarship responsibilities the summer of 2009.
  8. How do you intend to remain connected with Rotary after your scholarship term? (Check all that apply.) (a) Giving presentations
    - (b) Participating in community service projects and fundraising activities
    - (c) Attending Rotary club meetings and joining a Rotary club, if invited
    - (d) Joining a local Foundation alumni association
    - (e) Participating in orientation programs for future scholars

For the remaining questions, please use the following scale. Choose a rating value that best agrees with your opinion of the matter, and write that number in the space to the left of each item. 0 No opinion/Does not apply 1 Lowest possible rating 2 Low rating 3 Medium rating 4 High rating 5 Highest possible rating Please rate:

9. The guidance and cooperation you received from:

- (a) Your host Rotarian counselor 5
- (b) Your sponsor Rotarian counselor 5
- (c) Your host Rotary club 4
- (d) Other Rotary clubs in your host country 4
- (e) Your sponsor Rotary club and district 5
- (f) Your scholarship coordinator at The Rotary Foundation 5

10. The adequacy of the Foundation's financial award for:

- (a) Living costs 5
- (b) Tuition 5
- (c) Other needs (please specify): 5. The contingency provided for other expenses that made my experience abroad that much smoother and enjoyable, including a cell phone, a gym membership and a basic digital camera.

11. Proficiency in the language of your study institution and/or your host country, if different from your native language (does not apply to Cultural Scholars):

- (a) During the first month 2
- (b) During the last three months 4

12. Your overall effectiveness as a Rotary ambassador of goodwill. 3-4 I think that I did a fair job of being in touch with my Rotary counselor and getting involved with the rotary community here. However, I think there is more that I could have done in the way of community service. I only volunteered to be an English tutor and helping Tunghai. I would have liked to be part of a larger project.

13. Extent to which your experience as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar significantly changed your opinions on international affairs. 5 Very much.

15. Your living arrangements: (check one)

- Off campus: Apartment
- (a) Conducive to studying 5
- (b) Conducive to meeting other people 3
- (c) Met your expectations 5

16. Your opinion of The Rotary Foundation: 5

Additional comments:

My experience with the Rotary Foundation has far exceeded expectations. In addition to the wonderful experience I had abroad, I have also learned qualities of professionalism, enthusiasm and helpfulness from the Rotary members that I have come in contact with. In every interaction, be it with Rotarians in NC, Taiwan or Rotary Foundation counselors, I have been impressed with their competence, efficiency and great graciousness.

I am honored to now be part of the Rotary family. In one of my last presentations, Rotary John Wu who was also responsible for the Taichung district's donation of funds to 7690 for a scholarship, said "please come back to Taiwan to visit your friends here." It sounds a little cliché, but I've learned that the basis of this cultural exchange and goodwill that Rotary promotes is friendship. I am grateful for these forged relationships and hope to repay Rotary by also being a conduit for international friendship.