

November 2009



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**2009-2010 Ambassadorial Scholar**  
**One Month Report**

My study at the University of Aberdeen is going quite well so far. I am enrolled in the Masters of Science program entitled Strategic Studies. Strategic studies are essentially a study of the use of force in the international system. We learn about the causes and legality of war, for example. This helps to learn about how to prevent war and shows how war is used by many countries as an extension of their political goals. Through this program, I take two modules of classes which each meet twice a week. The first is entitled “International Organizations

and the Use of Force” while the second is “Strategic Theory.” The course is made up of about 25 students from varying countries and is a very interesting mix of background and goals. One example of something we are studying is the United Nations and their struggle with humanitarian intervention. This is of great interest to me as an Ambassadorial Scholar because I feel like humanitarian issues are of great concern to Rotary, and learning about the political and legal aspects of humanitarian intervention gives a new perspective to the topic.

Adjusting to postgraduate studies in a different country has been slightly challenging. The program relies on one final examination that is 100% of our grade for the course. I have never had a class which relies so heavily on the final and does not include any percentage for the work completed throughout the year. Furthermore, the style of teaching and learning is very different. At the beginning of the program the professors each gave us a syllabus with the lectures we would have on each day. Each lecture was focused on a different topic. They also gave us a “suggested reading list” for each topic that ranged from 30 to 70 books and journal articles. The professors ensured us that they did not expect us to read 30 or so books and articles for each topic, but that we should read as much as we needed to in order to be proficient in the topic. This amount of outside reading is unlike anything I’ve ever been asked to do before. Even if I read 5 books per lecture, that is much less than they had given us, and 5 books is still an overwhelming amount to read for each class. I have had some troubles, therefore, trying to determine the amount of reading that I can possibly get done while still learning about the topics and being able to enjoy the country that I am living in for the next 9 months.

My sponsor Rotarians were extremely helpful in preparing for my experience abroad. I was not living in my sponsor district after receiving my award so it was difficult to meet with them in person to discuss anything, but they were so helpful in answering any of my questions via telephone or email. I was awarded the scholarship as an alternate, and found out about my award during the first week of February. Because of the short notice, my sponsor Rotarians and I had a lot to do in a short amount of time to prepare everything for me to be ready to leave for school in September. For example, February is late to begin applying for graduate programs, especially when the majority of schools have earlier

deadlines for international students. Therefore, I needed to have my approved study institutions quite quickly in order to prepare an application and obtain the required transcripts, recommendation letters, and financial forms. My sponsor club and my scholarship coordinator were extremely helpful and understood the need for speed and worked with me to ensure that everyone was completed quickly and efficiently. I am still amazed at how smoothly and quickly everything fell into place.

I have been in contact with my host Rotary Club since the first day I arrived in Aberdeen. That night, my Host Counselor and his wife took me out to dinner and gave me an introduction to the city. That was a great way to ease my nerves and show me how much their Rotary Club cared that I was here and wanted to make sure I was doing alright. My Host Counselor and his wife, Jim and Jean (both Rotarians), are amazing. They have invited me to many different events and welcome me into their home. They have given me a tour of the city from a local resident's perspective which was great and I otherwise would not have gotten this intimate and local glimpse of the city. Through Jim and Jean I am becoming more involved with my host club. The club sponsored a flower show that displayed flower arrangements that depicted various Rotary programs. This was a great event for me to attend because I not only got to see one of their charity events as it was happening, but through the flower arrangements I was able to learn about a whole range of events that my specific club is involved in. I also was able to meet many of the other Rotarians who came to work at or view the event. It was a lovely occasion.

Unfortunately, I have only been able to attend one meeting of my host Rotary club so far. They meet for lunch on Mondays, and I have one of my courses from 12 to 2. This has made it harder to meet with the club, but I was able to miss one class to have my first introduction and speech to my host club. Jim picked me up at my apartment and we arrived at the meeting early enough so that I was able to meet many of the Rotarians before the meeting began. During the meeting I gave my first speech to the club, in which I just gave a brief introduction to myself and what I was doing in Aberdeen. I tried to link together my reasons for being there and their goals as a Rotary Club so that we each knew how we could help the other. Since this first meeting, I have given another speech at the Westhill Rotary Club. This was another speech discussing my activities in Scotland and the scholarship. I also have attended a mini-District meeting of the 4 other Ambassadorial Scholars in my District and gave a brief introduction to myself there as well.

My first impressions of Scotland and its people have all been very positive. The people here are amazingly friendly and always willing to help. Unfortunately, the international nature of my course meant that the majority of the students in my class are from outside of the United Kingdom. This is good and bad. I get to learn from people from everywhere from Mexico to The Netherland to Slovakia, but I also do not interact with many Scottish people on a regular basis in my classes. Furthermore, my course is almost entirely male. To adjust for these two demographic issues, I decided to join the University Field Hockey team. We play a couple games a week and it has allowed me a social and physical outlet away from my studies. Through field hockey I have met many different types of students which has been great to expand my social network.

I have not been able to visit that many culturally significant locations yet. On my way up to Aberdeen I did stop in Edinburgh and was able to go to Edinburgh's castle which was incredible. I also visited St. Andrews this past weekend with my host counselor

and his wife but as the weather was horrific we were not able to do quite as much site seeing as we would have liked. We did get to go to Dunnottar Castle, the Abby at Arbroath, and the castle at St. Andrews. Most of my weekends have so far been tied up with schoolwork and field hockey. I also just got a job to help pay for expenses so this will also probably take up some time. As I am not going home for any breaks, I plan on using these to be able to travel around Scotland more as it will give me more than just two days to get somewhere and explore. I have, however, been given many opportunities to share my culture. On a regular basis people ask me questions about my culture. Everyone seems very intrigued and eager to learn about which American stereotypes are real or not. My roommates and I discuss America the most. They love learning the card games we play and things we do as just normal, everyday activities. My biggest chance to share my culture will be on Thanksgiving. I have been asked to speak at the Grampian-Houston Association at their Thanksgiving Day Dinner specifically just to share how American's celebrate Thanksgiving. This will be a great chance for me to explain the history behind the holiday as well as how we celebrate it. I am really looking forward to this speech as Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays.

Above all, my time spent in Scotland thus far has been great. The city is old and made of beautiful granite buildings. The people are friendly and love hearing about my thoughts on their city as well as learning from me about America. The master's program will be a challenge, but I find the topics incredibly interesting and engaging. My host counselor and his wife are lovely people and I am so glad that we got paired together. The members of the club are just as friendly and open and it seems that everyone is offering help and advice. Aside from the slightly dismal weather, everything in Scotland is great so far!



A picture of Julie and Jim Couper, her host counselor, on a tour of Aberdeen.



Julie at her host Rotary club's meeting with the club president Iam Dow, Aberdeen St. Nicholas Rotary Club



The Flower Festival was called the Golden Wheels of Service and it was sponsored by the Rotary Clubs and Flower Clubs of Aberdeen. The flower arrangements were all projects that Rotary partakes in. This is one example where they send musical instruments to somewhere.



A November 2009 photo of Julie and the other rotary scholars in the District from St. Andrews. From left to right Lungile Zakwe from South Africa, Constantina Papad (not positive on her last name) from Greece, Andrew Smeltzer from Virginia, and Joanna Philip from Alabama