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An International Friend

by Lydia Ariaudo-Gragg

Sometimes our jobs lead us to different countries; countries with different cultures, customs and languages. At first we are afraid, but with the help of our colleagues and new neighbors, we are able to quickly adjust to this "ANOTHER WORLD".

Last January, Roger Smith, a visiting professor in the Physics Department, and his wife, Marion, a pharmacist, and their four children, Helen 14, Stephen 10, Alastair 7 and Marie 5, left Loughborough, England, (in the Midlands) to start this new venture. Their life would be changed and their views of the United States would be different from what they had expected.

Lydia: What was your impression of

the U.S. before coming here?

Marion: Guns. Before we came we had heard a lot about everyone having guns. We heard about the freeway shootings and that frightened us somewhat.

Lydia: What do you like about living here?

Marion: We enjoy the phrase, "Have a nice day." People are very courteous in shops and I enjoy having our groceries packed. The fresh fruits are delicious and we enjoy eating artichokes. The bike path that leads to the aquarium is a pleasure to take on a Saturday morning. We have a place on the beach and spend a lot of time with the children on the beach, taking long walks. The library system is better here. They offer more services such as story time, films and clubs.

Lydia: What foods do the children like the most?

Marion: McDonald's, pizza and fudge brownies.

Lydia: What do you think of the shopping malls?

Marion: We like them. They're about the same. However, prices in shops vary more widely here. I was told, "Don't buy anything until it goes on sale." This is true. In England, we don't get this continual "sale" advertising. Just the "end of season" clearances. I especially enjoy the garage sales. We

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Lydia: How does the school system differ?

Marion: The teachers are excellent, just like they are in England. However the facilities here are superior. La Mesa has an excellent library, computer facility and science program. In England, the students start at the age of five and attend school from 9 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Most students leave at the age of 16 to start work. In England, as over here, there is criticisms of the state education system. (Both are largely unjustified, especially with regards to the efforts of teachers.) We've been very pleased with the efforts made for our children.

Lydia: Can you tell me about your Health Plan?

Marion: We prefer the U.K. National Health Service to insurance here as some charges seem very unrealistic. Helen's orthodontics work was covered by the N.H.S., so we did not have to pay. Optical work and corrective lenses are free to children sixteen and under. People here are more aware of sensible diet and heart disease, but in England, we are more aware of the harm of additives, particularly color additives, in foods and drinks for children. There is a lot of positive health advertising here which we do not get in England.

Lydia: What are your dislikes about living here?

Marion: You have to have a car to get around. In England, we walk to the store. We walk a lot in England. We dislike the lack of sidewalks and streetlights here. We don't feel that safe taking a walk at night. Also, here there are too many television commercials. You could wash your hair during the commercials and not miss the main program. There are a lot of soap operas too.

Lydia: How do you feel about Monterev?

Marion: We thoroughly enjoy this community. We enjoy having a lot of sunshine. Our son Alastair wears shorts to school as much as possible. The climate here is truly paradise. We will hate to leave.



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