ITHF member from Vernon, BC, Canada, GIVONNA DEBRUIN shakes hands with Paul Harris in RI Headquarters at Evanston, Illinois, USA while on a visit to Chicago. Read the full story of the visit on page 3.
ITHF Tour 2014
John Steven, Tour Organizer

Bookings for the tour are coming in slowly; BETTY & GEORGE SCREPNEK from Canada were the first couple to book. Here is some additional information on the tour:

DAY 2: GREEN ISLAND REEF DAY: Green Island is a coral cay on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef with unique island rainforests, surrounded by white sandy beaches, magnificent coral reefs and abundant marine life. This will be a full day reef cruise departing Cairns at 9.00am, allowing 5 hours on Green Island and arriving back in Cairns at 5.00pm. “Big Cat” is a comfortable air-conditioned 35 metre catamaran with spacious interior cabins and a relaxed atmosphere. Travel time to Green Island is just over 1 hour from Cairns. Passengers will have plenty of time to relax and swim.

Included in this tour: Free choice of snorkelling gear or a glass bottom boat tour with commentary on fish and reef (AU$14 extra to do both). Snorkelling demonstration & reef presentation en route to Green Island. Use of Big Cat vessel during time at the island, as an air-conditioned base. Island rainforest walks and buffet lunch.

DAY 3: MOSSMAN GORGE, DAINTREE CRUISE & PORT DOUGLAS DAY TOUR: Travel by coach to Mossman Gorge, then board smaller shuttle bus to go up the gorge where there will be time to explore at your own pace. Morning tea at Daintree Cruise Centre, then the Daintree River Cruise on vessels with near silent propulsion, minimal vibration, exhaust omission and wake. After lunch, transfer by coach to Port Douglas, with some free time to explore the village with its tree-lined streets and historic North Queensland architecture.

DAY 4: KURANDA: Take the Kuranda Tourist Train up to Kuranda, where there will be time to explore the markets. Attractions at Kuranda Heritage Market include: Souvenirs – from toys to well-priced opals; boomerangs; authentic, locally painted didgeridoos (free lessons available). Explore the village and have lunch (own expense) at one of the many cafes, restaurants or pubs in Kuranda. In the afternoon catch the Skyrail Gondola which travels over the World Heritage rainforest, to a coach for return to Cairns.

If you need more information on the Tour please contact PP John Steven: johnsteven@bigpond.com
Visit to Chicago
PAM DOYLE
Revelstoke, BC, Canada

In August, my travelling companion GIVONNA DEBRUIN of Vernon, BC, Canada, and I travelled to Chicago, Illinois, USA for a week’s visit. Givonna, an experienced ITHF member, had written to TAMIYE & JIM MEEHAN, to ask if they could host us for three nights. We were thrilled to see Tamiye’s quick and positive response with suggestions on what to do with our free time and an offer to pick us up at the airport. At the airport, a Jeep pulled up with our names posted in the window! At Meehans’ lovely home in a heritage area of Chicago, we were greeted by two curious Norwegian Elkhounds: Trinka and Cody. With their help we settled into our rooms located on the third floor and then were treated to dinner at a Middle Eastern restaurant.

During our stay Tammy drove us to Rotary One, a Chicago Cubs’ baseball game, and the Chicago Art Institute. Jim & Tammy also provided us with a three day rail pass so that we could return home on our own. On our final evening together, we treated the Meehans to a restaurant of their choice. Good thing it was a long walk as the place specialized in desserts!
Finally our day of departure and once again Tamiye offered to drive us - this time to our hotel in city centre. Saying good bye to our four new friends, we discussed where to meet up next – the Rotary Convention in Sydney, the Guatemalan project Tamiye’s club is involved with, or a reciprocal home-hosted visit here in Vernon and Revelstoke, BC.

This was my first experience with hosting although I’ve been a member of ITHF for almost three years .... and what a positive experience it was! I encourage others who haven’t taken the opportunity to try a home host stay or to be home hosts - to just do it! It starts with something as simple as an email request. Thanks to our gracious hosts Tamiye and Jim and to ITHF for making this connection possible.

Rotary Fellowship & Family Roots
Claudette & David Smette
Jamestown, North Dakota, USA

Claudette and I joined ITHF in Bangkok. Last April we received a phone call from LINDA & JIM BAUER in Kennewick, Washington, USA, requesting a host stay on their way to the East Coast. During our wonderful visit with them, we started talking about future trips. Claudette and I indicated that we were heading for the International Rotary Conference in Lisbon, but were also thinking of a side trip to Norway to see if I could find the old farm on which my great grandfather was born and left back in 1870. Using the ITHF website, we located ASBJORN & BODIL LEIN in Nesbyrn, Norway. We emailed them, and in a couple of days Asbjorn wrote back. The Leins were also heading to Lisbon, but they had a couple of days that we could come and stay. When we arrived, we had a wonderful evening visit, but the next morning the real surprise came. Asbjorn had located the old family farm and even assembled a group of relatives at the farmstead! He had also done some research on our heritage. Talk about Rotary Fellowship! Such a wonderful experience and a trip of a lifetime to find my family’s roots.

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An Unforgettable Experience
PAREG & PUNAM SHETH
Bharuch, Gujarat, India

Our visit to Canada began with SURINDER & BONNIE KHANNA of Calgary, Alberta calling on us at our home in January 2012. We accepted their invitation to visit them in July 2013.

After travelling 36 hours, we landed in Calgary on 15th July to a most delightful experience. Surinder and Bonnie extended a warm welcome to their home. We had a room ready to rest and a most delicious food was ready to eat, but we talked for hours about Rotary, New Culture and golf. The gup shup (Hindi for “chatter”) was not only an appetiser; it revived memories of the good times in our life. We stayed, played golf, wined and dined and met a lot of their friends almost every day. We attended the Heritage Park Rotary Club, where we met DGN Martin, who is my batch mate during Rotary year 2015-16.

We took a bus to Edmonton, where BETTY & GEORGE SCREPNEK welcomed us with huge smiles writ on their faces! We directly drove to visit a picnic spot where members of the Rotary Club of Edmonton Glenora were helping with a community services daycare family picnic. It was a delightful experience to find all the Rotarians busy cooking food and playing with the children.

We also visited the administrative building of Alberta Province in Edmonton and many more places. In the evening, we were welcomed by AG Nirmal Nijjar & Dr. Tirath along with families of three club presidents to a dinner of Indian food. It was an amazing experience talking with them about Rotary story. Everybody was happy by taking responsibility in Rotary. On our second day, we visited to a Sikh Guruwara (Hindu) Temple, a shopping mall and many other places of interest in Edmonton with AG Nirmal Nijjar. Our hostess Betty organised an evening get-together with Senior Rotarians of District 5370 and the mayor of Sherwood. Betty had taken a lot of trouble to make sure that we were comfortable at her home.

Next morning PDG Ken Harverland drove us from Edmonton to Jasper, taking us via the Hot Springs. As soon as we entered the Jasper National Park, we felt like special guests of the park as well as Canada. We enjoyed the hot springs, Maligne Lake Cruise, Jasper Lodge, and a gondola ride. Rotarian Libby Fenton and her husband Greg, the Superintendent of Jasper National Park were our hosts; the Rotary Club of Jasper had taken enough care to make our visit a life-time experience. They had organised a picnic dinner for us with all members.
From Jasper we returned to Calgary. Nature’s beauty was at its peak, thanks to the efforts of the government and the local community who have preserved the nature with utmost loving care. Trip is stunningly beautiful with its water falls, pine trees, lakes, Rocky Mountains, and Columbia Ice Field......

Finally, we paid a one day visit to Red Deer with DON & ROXENE KELLOWAY. We visited the important places of Red Deer and played golf. One more unforgettable day; one more day of walking, talking, golfing and partying in the evening.

At last, it was time for us to get back. We completed our journey with tears in our eyes. Every one we met was a wonderful host. The smiles never left their faces. It is difficult to find such wonderful people who never thought for a minute that we were imposing on their hospitality. Every Rotarian should explore such fellowship in his life. We experienced the Essence of Rotary by participating in the programme.

We do not think that a mere “Thank You” will convey our heartfelt feelings towards our hosts. We owe everyone a lot, and until we reciprocate similar hospitality, we feel indebted.

Once again, thank you, friends; each one of you was a genuinely a Wonderful Human Being and we totally mean it. Thanks for everything you did for us; it will be cherished in our hearts forever. Some people pass through this world and leave it as it is - as they found it. But people like you take the time to do special things for others that make the world more beautiful.

We extend an invitation through this; visit us in India at the earliest opportunity.

Fishing in Maryland
PHIL & SUSIE KOMORNK
Laurel, Maryland, USA

What kind of surprises will you have when you host your next ITHF visitor? When MATS BERGQVIST of Sollentuna, Stockholm, Sweden, and his twin sons Emil and Erik visited us this summer, we didn’t know we were hosting a recorded opera singer. Mats’ “hidden talents” were revealed in his gift of two CD’s.

Arriving by train after a visit with friends in New Jersey, the experienced and seasoned travelers headed out to explore the Washington DC area, seeing some of the many monuments and visiting museums belonging to the Smithsonian Institute. The size and scale of the buildings and memorials are always impressive to visitors in Washington. Beyond the must-see places in the area, Phil, Mats, and the young men went to the huge chain store, Bass Pro Shops® to buy rods, reels, and licenses to get in a little fishing in the Patuxent River that flows near our home. And yes, they have proof of their catch in the photo!
It is not surprising that Rotarians partaking in Rotary Friendship Exchange (RFE) programmes are often also members of ITHF. A recent RFE to Norfolk, England proved no exception, and when we noted that one of the couples coming in from Australia was an ITHF member it was obvious that they should be our guests. STUART & JEANETTE DAVIDSON, from Mooroopna, Victoria stayed with us for 4 days in early August and as well as fulfilling the planned RFE programme, we had some interesting times together. Highlights included St George’s English Whisky Distillery, and the Nutshell Pub in Bury St Edmunds, which claims to be the smallest pub in England. The picture shows us at Sandringham; behind us is a view of HM The Queen’s House, where the Royal Family always celebrate Christmas.

What is surprising, however, is the continuing lack of knowledge of either the RFE programme or the many and diverse recreational and vocational Rotary Global Fellowship Groups – there are over 60 of them. Whenever I’m talking to clubs in my own district or whilst visiting other clubs during our travels through RFE or ITHF, I make a point of speaking about them. As founder Paul Harris said: “Fellowship is wonderful; it illuminates life’s pathway, spreads good cheer, and is worth high price.” ITHF is a great vehicle for promoting itself and the fellowship ethos of Rotary – let’s keep spreading the word!

ITHF STORE

The holiday season is coming. If you are looking for something for that special person who has everything, consider giving them, or yourself an ITHF light weight windbreaker jacket with a hood hidden in the collar. It has been a hit with many members.

Other items for sale in the ITHF Store include a sew-on/iron-on ITHF Logo Patch for use on your favorite casual wear shirt, blouse, cap or hat and self-adhering Luggage Stickers that can be placed on your luggage for easy identification at airports, hotels, bus, and train stations worldwide. A smaller version of the sticker has also made available that can be used as a bumper sticker or to be placed in a prominent place for you to display your pride in ITHF membership.

Prices (and shipping charges per item) in US dollars are as follows:

- Jacket - $34.00 ($9)
- ITHF Logo Patch - $4.00 ($.50)
- Golf Shirt - $18.00 ($4)
- Luggage Sticker - $1.00 ($.25)

Please go to the Members’ Area page of our website and click on the yellow ITHF Store tab or copy and paste this url http://www.ithf.org/ithf_store.php for ordering and payment instructions. Click on the shirts’ graphic for US and metric sizing information.

Photos of our jackets can be seen by clicking on the ITHF Jackets 2012 link near the top in the Document Center on the right side of the Members’ Area page.
A Visit to Dallas
FRANK WILLETT
Sarasota, Florida, USA

In early September, after finishing up a business trip to Dallas, Texas, USA, I spent a couple of days with GILBERT & LINDA BROWN, who picked me up at my hotel early Sunday morning. From there we headed first to their Presbyterian church, and later to the private golf club to which they belonged for a delightful meal. They then welcomed me to their home in Hyde Park, a residential area of gorgeous unique homes. They had only recently moved there, but it was Gilbert’s childhood home full of memories. We chatted late into the evening. Somehow there was an immediate comfort level with one another as we shared private parts of our histories.

Monday, fortunately, was the Labor Day holiday, so there were no time pressures. The Browns had never been to the George W. Bush Presidential Library. Consequently, it was a revealing experience for all of us. For me, the most interesting was the replica of the Presidential Library in Washington, DC.

As the guest speaker at Gilbert’s Tuesday Rotary meeting, I had the opportunity of speaking about ITHF. As is usual with my talks, there were many members who were totally unfamiliar with fellowships in general, and so ITHF was a new awareness. One individual picked up an application and was preparing to fill it out that afternoon.

In our initial correspondence, the Browns had asked if there was anything in Dallas that I would like to see. I was interested in seeing the Sixth Floor Museum in the building from which former United States President John F. Kennedy was shot in 1962. They arranged to drop me for four hours at the Sixth Floor Museum. There I stood at the window from which the shots were fired. There were many film clips since so many people were filming the parade route of the President. Many of these clips caught the actual shooting and the rapid speed up and deployment of Secret Service and police.

I am hoping that Gilbert and Linda will accept my invitation to stay with us in Sarasota.

Connecting Points

BRIAN WESTLAKE of Toronto, Ontario, Canada writes that he and JOYCE had the pleasure of recently hosting Raissa Begosso, a Rotaractor from Sao Paulo Brazil, whose father is an ITHF member. “Following Raissa’s home visits with Rotary contacts in Montreal and Ottawa, she joined us in Toronto. She is a lawyer in Sao Paulo and being a lawyer myself, we had lots in common. Part of our busy sight-seeing in Toronto included a visit to Osgoode Hall, the site of the Courts of Appeal in Ontario. It was a delightful experience for us to host this charming young lady and fine representative of Rotary.”

Raissa got to meet her life-long pen pal from China who is studying at the University of Toronto. A pleasant visit to Niagara Falls and wine tasting at Niagara-on-the-Lake is captured in the attached photos.
NIRMALA & AMBALAKAT RAM MOHAN of Palakkad, India, stopped in Goa on their way home from the RI Convention in Lisbon. Although they were not able to make ITHF connections with local members, Ambalakat was able to talk to the Macupa Rotary Club about ITHF. Many members were interested. Nirmala and Ambalakat enjoyed the home hospitality of some members, who are planning to visit them in India shortly. “We enjoyed connecting with people of other cultures during travels abroad and other parts in India. The Fellowship makes lot of difference, and we have got and gained a vast number of good Rotary friends every where ROTARY exists.”

ITHF'ers SANDIE & WALLY KRUTZ of Northern California, USA and JOY & ALLEN BONIFACE of Warkworth, New Zealand have not seen each other in a few years, but kept tabs on each other throughout the America's Cup held on San Francisco Bay, USA in September. Friendly competition is always good fun between Rotarians.

ITHF offers condolences to Regional Vice-President DICK ANDERSON, Middletown, Rhode Island USA on the recent loss of his wife ELIZABETH.

ITHF 2014 Rotary International Convention Information

Board of Directors Meeting
We have received confirmation and room assignment for our Board of Directors meeting in Sydney. As is customary it is on Saturday, which is May 31, 2014, prior to the official opening of the Convention. RI scheduled ITHF for 12 noon to 13:30 in the Marine Room. We hope this is early enough notification for your convention activities planning.

Breakfast AGM: John Steven
The Rotary International Convention will be held at the Sydney Olympic site some 20 km (12 miles) west of central Sydney. Although there is limited accommodation in the convention area, it is recommended that you stay in the city centre. Free transport is provided to the convention, and the most convenient station is the Sydney Central Station, labelled “Great Southern Rail” on the RI accommodation map. There are 2 hotels conveniently located near the station, The Mercure Sydney, (RI No. 16) and The Sebel Surry Hills, (RI No. 21). These hotels are well placed for most of the activities in the city.

The AGM, on Tuesday, June 3, from 7 to 9am, will be held at the Sebel Hotel. Cost is $40 Australian per person. It is necessary to book for the breakfast in advance, through our Administrator, Phil Komorik. pskomorn@yahoo.com

The Tour, Convention and AGM Breakfast all promise to provide great fun, fellowship and relaxation. Do yourself a favour – JOIN US.
Fulfilling a Dream
GRACE MAANO
Sydney, Australia

I have always wanted to visit Africa, so when a fellow member of Rotary E-club of Greater Sydney sent an invitation to attend the grand opening of the “School for Life” on April 18 in Katuuso, Uganda, I jumped at the chance…. finally, a valid excuse to fulfill my dream of coming to Africa!

In Uganda, I was lucky to be hosted by PATRICK BYASHISHAKI, who offered me accommodation at his Green Valley Hotel at Gabba. Patrick also offered to drive me to one of the hospitals I was going to visit – Kitovu Hospital. Interestingly, the road to Kitovu, crosses the World’s Equatorial Line!

Not only did I get to meet members of Patrick’s Rotary Club of Gabba, but I was also invited to attend a “giving away ceremony” where the daughter of one of their members was getting engaged. A fellow Rotarian loaned me her national dress to wear for the function, so I got to wear a gomesi!

I learned first hand that in Africa, the concept of “time” is totally different from what I know: ie, 8 AM means anytime in the morning; and functions need not start on time. The Engagement Party was supposed to be 1pm, but it didn’t start until 3pm. Consequently, I didn’t eat before coming and was starving by 5pm when the program took a break to serve lunch! But nonetheless it was fun and great way to experience the culture!

Patrick’s hospitality included an invitation to have dinner with his lovely wife JULIET and two daughters in a nice African restaurant. Every trip sadly, has to end, and the month of April saw me ticking off one of the things listed in my bucket list: COME TO AFRICA – CHECK!!!
A Memorable Trip  
SITA RUPAKETI  
Kathmandu, Nepal

I come from the country of beautiful mountains - Nepal - landlocked between China and India. Thousands of people from all around the world come to see my country’s rich culture, and traditions, and thousands of others come for trekking, hiking and other adventure sports like bungee jumping or rafting. And now it was my turn to go to another country.

From Nepal, my mother country, to Washington DC, the capital of one of the greatest nations in the world was a dazzling adventure for me! My hosts PHIL & SUSIE KORMORNIK were wonderful to me and my family. They could not do enough to allow us to experience the capital scene.

Rotary played a large role in my visit. I attended four meetings and a membership seminar for District 7620. Since Phil & Susie belong to different Rotary clubs, I was able to attend both their clubs’ meetings: Phil’s Columbia Patuxent Rotary Club and Susie’s Rotary Club of Capital Hill of Washington DC. As well, I visited the Rotary Club of Ellicot City, and listened to Susie’s presentation on ITHF to the Provisional Rotary Club of Federal City.

After the meetings were over, we went on with the rest of our adventure. Fort McHenry was first on our list. I learned how significant this fort was in the History of the USA. From now on I will see this fort in my mind whenever I hear the American National Anthem and the words: "by the rockets red glare........the flag was still there."

The Smithsonian Museums are unbelievable in their beauty, grandeur, organization, and the scope of the information presented. Coming from Katmandu, this was a quantum leap for me. I also loved the National Botanical Gardens as I am very interested in plants. One day Susie took me to see an estate auction, something else I had never experienced. I wanted to bid and buy all of those beautiful things!

Since Susie’s birthday happened to fall on my last day, we celebrated at Rongoli Indian Restaurant. Indian food, candles, a birthday cake and of course birthday songs and dancing made for a wonderful evening.

The trip included delicious food, interesting conversations, historical places, meeting hundreds of Rotarians, and shopping, shopping, shopping. I’m very thankful to Phil and Susie for making my trip very memorable. It was a wonderful once in a lifetime experience made possible by Rotary ITHF friends.
Increasing the Rotary Experience
JIM MCMAHON
Ipswich, Queensland, Australia

After visiting with my daughter and grand children, I spent three days with MARTIN & MARY CATHERINE LIMBIRD in Fort Collins, Colorado. They picked me up from my Denver hotel, and drove me to Fort Collins. We visited a couple of their Rotary Club projects - a display of older time farm implements housed at a model farm and a museum displaying South American artifacts of Inca times. Both places were interesting and both great projects.

The next day Martin arranged a visit to the New Belgium Brewery, which was the most interesting and entertaining tour I've ever experienced; copious amounts of amber fluid were available! Afterwards we went for a drive around their dam area and then to the nearest national park, where I learned more about the fauna and animals of the region. In the evening we had a really good discussion about Rotary and many other subjects with Martin's Rotary club president. The Limbirds were great hosts with no shortage of good discussion, good food and good refreshments.

After visiting friends in Milwaukee, I flew to Washington DC, where KEN WEISS picked me up at the airport. At his home in Derwood, Maryland I met his delightful wife BEATRICE. The next morning I attended Ken's Rotary Club of Gaithersburg, after which Ed Forrest drove me to Frederick for a good history tour and a visit to a museum of Civil War importance. Although Ken was busy with work commitments, he or Beatrice made sure I was delivered or picked up from the Metro on my travels into Washington. Although all the monuments that I had come to visit were closed, I saw lots of things that I most probably would have not seen otherwise. Ken and Beatrice were great hosts, and I am very grateful to them.

Ken drove me over to the Rotary Club of Columbia Patuxent breakfast meeting where I met my next host PHIL KOMORNIK and later, his wife SUSIE, who has turned out to be the best guide and driver ever!

Despite the closing of many Federal parks and monuments due to the budget issues, we found other private or state operated events and sites to enjoy. We watched competitions of carbine and artillery firing of the North-South Skirmish Association in Winchester, Virginia and continued our historic travels to Mount Vernon, the home of the first U.S. President, George Washington.

On Sunday in Baltimore, we caught the Columbus Day parade - my first street parade in America and visited the *USS Constellation*, the Flagship of the US African Squadron, 1859 – 1861.

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And of course you can’t visit Maryland without trying steamed Maryland Blue Crabs!

Before the rain set in we managed a trip to Gettysburg. This consisted of a guided bus tour, around the battlefields and then the amazing Visitor Center and museum. To finalise my experience of the American Civil War, we went to Harper's Ferry, and I was told about John Brown and his stand on anti-slavery. Once again I must thank Phil and Susie for being perfect hosts who made my visit a most enjoyable experience.

I am very glad that I joined ITHF. I found that the live-in experience and the personal contacts I have made with my hosts will live with me forever. I will be recommending ITHF to all my Rotary members in Australia; it is a must to join, to enjoy the benefits of increasing the Rotary experience and meet lovely people from other countries. I look forward to meeting my hosts in Sydney next year for the Rotary International Convention.

The Last Word: Phil Komornik

As I sit writing this article for our newsletter, Pat Graf, our Newsletter Editor, and her Rotarian husband, Coleman, from Salmon Arm, British Columbia, Canada, are preparing to travel to Calgary, Alberta, Canada to spend Canadian Thanksgiving weekend with their daughter's family. What an appropriate time to put this together.

Since January of 2007, Pat has been compiling, editing and publishing the articles our members have been sending her about their travels, tours and connections with other ITHF members. When she began this, the newsletter was produced twice annually. So many articles were coming in that Pat voluntarily began publishing Connections on a quarterly basis a few years ago.

Since I have been ITHF's Administrator, every 3 months we have sent out the email asking all our members to, "Please send your articles to Pat Graf..." We will not be sending that particular email anymore. This October's Connections is the last one that Pat will be publishing for us. It has come time for her to "retire." As Pat put it, "...this is my last newsletter. Hope it's not my last contribution to the newsletter, though. Coleman and I would really like to make a few connections on our travels!!"

Actually, Pat gave us more than a year to find another capable ITHF member to take her place. It was announced at the Annual General Membership Meeting in Lisbon, Portugal, in June that Kimberly Carroll of Alexandria, Virginia, USA will be stepping into Pat's shoes and will begin as our Newsletter Editor with the January 2014 issue. So as we are saying, "Bye and great luck" to Pat, we are welcoming Kimberly.

Personally, I can not give anything near enough "Thank-you's" for all this past work and friendship. Pat and Coleman, thank-you and great journeys. We look forward to hosting you someday here on the US East Coast.