

## Exchange Students Become Just Part Of The Family

BY SUSAN USHER

"Family" has a new meaning for three teen-agers who are calling the South Brunswick Islands home this school year.

West Brunswick High School students Patricia (Patty) Mora, Taichi (Ti) Sasaki and Susana Viscarret call Boone's Neck, Shallotte and Sunset Beach home respectively, if only for awhile.

All three are American Intercultural Student Exchange (AISE) students. Come June, the three will return to their native countries and the families they left behind last August.

But they will leave behind family of another kind—their host families. Though the students look forward to going home, leaving won't be easy.

"They're beautiful kids, like your own children. You treat them the same way and do the same things for them," says Iris Bellamy of Boone's Neck. She and her husband, K.T., are serving as the host family for Patty Mora and don't look forward to the time she will go.

When, Patty, 18, graduated from high school in Quito, Ecuador, last July, she had already been accepted by AISE and had been writing the Bellamys since April. Like other applicants, she got to choose the country she wanted to visit, but not the specific location and she had passed an English test and a psychological profile.

She arrived with few preconceived notions of what she would find and knowing very little about her host family or host country. "I had been told I would be living near the beach. I had envisioned a house on the beach with no trees," she said.

Instead, the Bellamy's rambling Spanish-style house nestles among oaks laced with moss overlooking the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and Holden Beach.

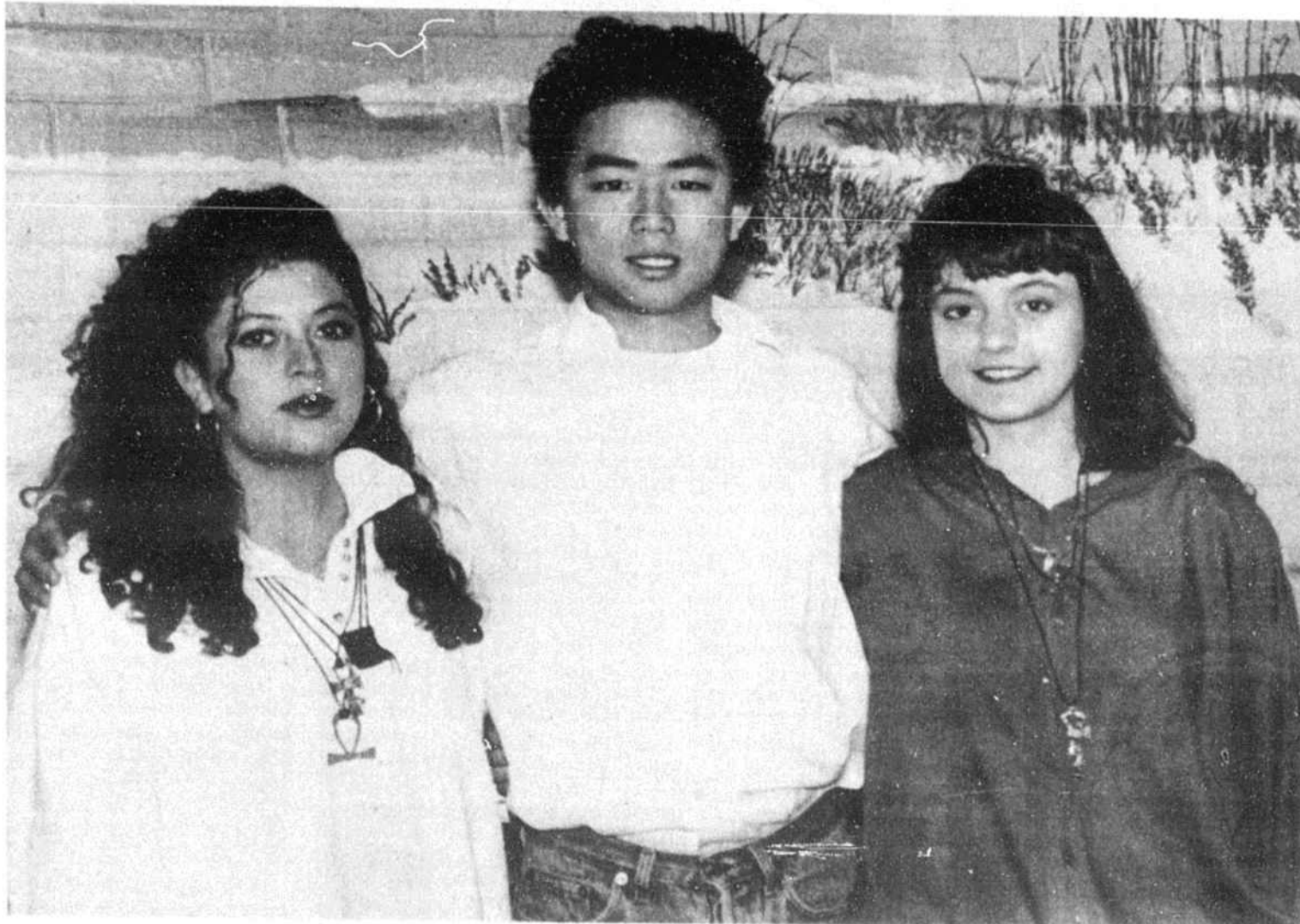
The Bellamys had kept an exchange student for a short while last year on an emergency basis, but hadn't really considered hosting a student for the entire year. That changed last fall.

"We decided we wanted to know what it was like to have a girl in the house," said Mrs. Bellamy. Laughing, she continued, "It's different! There's more companionship, we share more."

The Bellamy home, friendly and large, has become something of a gathering point for local exchange students.

"When she leaves and we decide not to do this again, we will be really lonesome," said K.T. Bellamy, a former county tax supervisor.

Both Patty and Taichi Sasaki—called Ti by his friends—are seniors at West Brunswick and will participate in commencement exercises May 29. Patty's par-



EXCHANGE STUDENTS Patty Mora, Ti Sasaki and Susana Viscarret enjoy the beaches of their home away home, as depicted in this mural at the West Brunswick High School cafeteria.

ents, Leonardo and Marlene, will be in the audience. He is an agronomist, general manager of a water treatment plant that produces bottled water. She is an international operator and also owns a health food store.

Patty, 18, has enormous brown eyes that shine from beneath long, bouncy hair. She's interested in a career that makes use of her artistic bent, perhaps interior design or architecture. "I want to be somebody in this world," she said. "I want to go to another country to specialize."

Meanwhile she's enjoying nights out in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and opportunities to travel—Disneyworld, New York, Virginia, and possibly Philadelphia and Canada after graduation.

Patty's had only a touch of homesickness, mainly around the Christmas holidays and her birthday, which passed unnoticed here.

Ti came to Shallotte from Saitama, a city

about an hour outside Tokyo. While he had learned quite a bit of English from a U.S. Army soldier, he wants to master the language so that he can study business at either the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill or Penn State.

He's "fit in with the family" of Bobby and Carolyn Lewis of Shallotte. For their son, Ricky, Ti's presence is a big change from having three older sisters around.

"It's like having another best friend, but more like a brother," Ricky says, trying to explain their relationship. "We help each other with problems. I help Ti with his English and he helps me with my math."

As for Ti, he's quick to add, "I'm lucky I came to this house."

They've learned to appreciate each other's tastes in music—Ti's slower jazz and soul and Ricky's rock and roll and heavy metal. Ti's missed snow skiing but is glad

that he's not in Minnesota or Michigan with the rest of the AISE exchange students from Japan.

For Ricky the year is also providing a transition from being the only boy in a family of girls to being the only child at home.

"It's worked out really good," said Mrs. Lewis.

When Ricky's sisters are around, that's fine, too. Ti left two older sisters in Saitama, where his father is a stock advisor and his mother, an artist.

On Christmas Eve, the time difference emphasized just how far away from home he is. At 10 a.m. here it was around 11 p.m. at his parents' home.

When he returns to Japan, Ti, 18, will be preparing for exams in English and Japanese. If he passes and gets good grades, then he can join fellow students in preparing for national testing in February that de-

termines admission to universities. "School for seniors in Japan is a lot different," he said. "After October they don't have to go to school on a regular basis. They finish their coursework while preparing for the tests in February. It's very important. If you fail you have to wait another year to take them again."

Ti will also return to Japan as a football player after place-kicking for the Trojans last season. "I had watched American football on television and wanted to play," he said.

Ti's natural sense of humor has paid off during his stay here, especially in those first months when he knew little English. Classmates, teasing, tried to get him to use words he quickly found aren't considered "very nice."

The year has also brought the unexpected: "Japanese don't use drugs," said Ti. "Here there's a lot. I was so surprised!"

School here has generally been easy for the exchange students academically, with language comprehension the real challenge. Ti changed his schedule because he couldn't understand several teachers' speech patterns. Both he and Patty had difficulty in a U.S. history course. Not only was the material unfamiliar, but the teacher was also a fast talker.

Susana Viscarret arrived in Brunswick County around Christmas after what she and her friends term "Operation Rescue."

Her parents, Jesus and Begona Viscarret of Valladolid, Spain, left their casino-type coin machine business and horse ranch to take Susana her out of a "bad situation" with a host family near Seattle, Wash.

Susana's sister, Marta, is an exchange student in Whiteville and knew Patty Mora and the other exchange students at West. A Rotary International exchange student, shared her need for a new home with members of St. Brendan's Catholic Church, and Lee and Anne Buttrey of Sunset Beach volunteered.

Susan's settled in with the Buttreys and their daughters, Amanda, Elizabeth and Christina, who range in age from fourth grader to college freshman. At 16, the high school junior is the youngest and shyest of the exchange students. She's also the least fluent in English.

The Buttreys have hosted exchange students before and know that learning the language and culture of the host country is an important part of the experience. So when Susana chose Spanish-speaking students for her closest friends at school, it won her a fatherly scolding from Lee Buttrey as well as chiding from her fellow exchangers.

That's part of what being family's all about.

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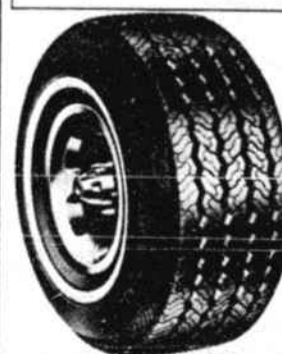
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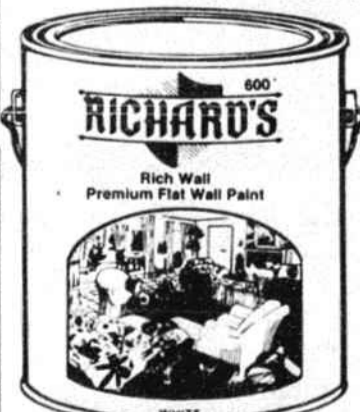
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