



Chantal RENIER - KELLER

First of all, I'd like to say how much I enjoyed and appreciated spending a year in UAHS as an AFS student from Belgium.

I was very lucky to have a wonderful and warm hearted family, the McCoys, with whom I had a wonderful relation and with whom I kept in touch until they passed away.

It was difficult to leave by the end of the year, but AFS is an exchange program, not an immigration program and that is the way it should be. For me, this year has determined the choice and decisions later on that influenced my whole life - and still do.

I went back to Brussels and started university, graduated in contemporary history but didn't want to be a history teacher and decided to go on with graduate studies. As I was very interested in international relations, I spent a year in The Hague, Holland, attending captivating classes and learning Dutch the way I had never managed to learn it at school in Belgium, even if I had had it for many years, Dutch being spoken by 60% of the population.

I loved my year in The Hague and as I wanted to learn more about international relations, I applied to the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Science in Bologna, Italy. I would have probably never had applied to that school if I had not spent a year in the US as an AFS student. Another very interesting and exciting year! I loved learning Italian, so much easier for a French speaking person and what a fabulous country for history and art.

And, last but not least, I met my future husband Hans from Switzerland. So, that's how a Belgian met a Swiss in an American university in Italy! We have been happily married for 43 years and we hope to be able to undertake a lot more together, as we love traveling and discovering new countries and civilizations.

Living in Zurich meant learning German, and learning to understand the local Swiss German dialect, which is really not very easy, as it is only spoken. For several years I worked as a French teacher as well as in a team developing language learning method. I must stay that I feel I have over the years become very Swiss and I appreciate when everything goes according to schedule and functions!

We had a 3 year stay in Melbourne, Australia, which we enjoyed very much. We felt very welcome and loved the Aussie way of living. We could have stayed there a lot longer too!

We have two wonderful daughters and 3 grandchildren, living in Frankfort, Germany and in Mexico City, so that keeps us traveling. Which we love!

Since we retired - luxury of Europeans - we have been spending the summer in the south of France, like many of the north Europeans do. It's not Florida, but you can - almost - be sure to have nice weather in the summer. We enjoy having the family as well as visitors from overseas, so the summer is usually very busy, which is great.

I regret very much not being able to attend the 50th Class Reunion, but I wish you all a wonderful time!!!