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My first visit to Canada was October 1995 and I went two weeks before Betty flying from Prestwick Airport to Toronto. After looking around I found a good backpacker's place to stay called the Marigold Hostel where I made some good friends, one girl called Jo Reeves and two German girls. Jo hired a car and she drove it, we shared the costs and visited the Niagara Falls for the day, it was quite a long distance away and she was not used to driving on the left hand side of the road so she was a bit nervous. Anyway we had a great day there and also met two girls who were on holiday from Scotland, one of them had been nursing in Dumfries Infirmary and the other one had been in a hospital in Fife. I also met a French doctor who thought I was great all the places I had been in the past and how it was good for the mind doing something different every day and having someone to talk to every day. He was just a young doctor and we would sit out in the veranda talking and one day we went up the tower where you get a great view for miles. Some nights four of us would go to the cinema, the rest of the time we had a look around most places in Toronto.

It was now time to move on to Brandon, Manitoba to visit James and Pauline Black, family friends who had emigrated from Scotland. I got the bus in the morning, it was quite a long drive with some lovely scenery on the way, I enjoyed the journey and it let me see a good part of Canada. I arrived in Brandon at night and when I tried phoning Pauline there was no one at home so I decided to find a place to stay for the night. I found a place run by Mormons where the food was all organic, we sat around a table and they gave me a good feed, later this young girl showed me where my room was, it was very nice with about eight bunk beds in it. After I got to bed she read me a story, there were some other young people sleeping there but I was so tired I was soon asleep. In the morning I got Pauline on the phone, James was away working so she came to get me, we spent the forenoon getting something to eat and she had a good laugh at the place I had been staying in! I bought her a packet of cigarettes and she enjoyed that smoke!

James and Pauline Black with Heather and James



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James was working with his digger making a new golf course, it is a very popular sport in Canada and he seemed to get plenty of work so I got a tour of all the golf courses in Brandon. There is also a big underground sport area with skating rinks as they hold lots of tournaments in the winter time there. James took me to quite a few farms around and also to a big horse fair where there was a bit with all the horses in stalls and bags on them to collect urine every day. He also took me to the cattle feed lot and a big National park. Some days he had to work and Pauline would take me around, she took me to a big cattle market, it sold thousands of suckled calves coming from the prairies and mountain country, they were bought on at this market and travelled to America to be finished off in the big feedlots. Don Chapman also bought his cattle there and he had a buyer on the television hall buying them over the television for him. There could be one hundred calves in the ring at a time, they are weighed before being sold and there can be three or four owners in the ring at any time.

Heather Black worked in town and young James was still at high school, he liked to drive me round the farm on the quad bike when not at school, James had cut hay off the whole farm and sold it to a neighbour for his dairy. It gets very cold in Canada in the winter so all the garages and dairy sheds are fitted with central heating or they would freeze. James also had a large transport lorry which was fitted with a heating system.

James with his lorry



One day I helped Heather to drain off the swimming pool and cover it up for the winter and on her day off she took me off in her car to look round the shops to get a present for James's birthday, she bought a large rocking chair, something he had always wanted. Then she decided she wanted to buy a new bedroom suite and had me trying out the beds with her! She was a very pretty girl and was good company and we got on well which was good, anyway she wanted to finish off her day by going to the pictures so I got her to phone Pauline and tell her what we were doing, so it was a

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lovely finish to a very good day. I knew I could not stay too long at James Blacks and I had not time to go to Don Chapman's which was a long way off so I knew I had to return to Toronto as Betty had arrived at her cousin Barbara's house. Heather had insisted that we all went for a meal to this big restaurant as it was a special big night with some country and western music playing. They all took me to get the bus in the morning, I can see them standing there and getting lots of kisses from Heather, she seemed to like me and was sad to see me go!

James and Pauline's House



It was a full day's drive with good weather, real frosty nights and sunny days and at that time of the year the scenery is lovely crossing Canada. It was getting near night time when I arrived in Toronto, I returned to the Marigold Hostel where I had stayed before, it was pretty full but he got me a bed in the back of his office for the night so I had a very good sleep and the next day met up with some old friends who were still there and got a good rest as the travelling can be very tiring.

I got the bus to Brentford and Bill came to meet me with his car and I stayed at Barbara's for the rest of the holiday. We went to visit Betty and George, that's Barbara's sister and they took us out for a meal, they live in Paris, Ontario. Another day we went to a Mormon town where they still work with the horses and wear old-fashioned dress and grow all their own food and bring it to sell at the market, they have lovely horses and carts. Another day we went to a cattle market where they sell all kinds of cattle and animals as well as fruit and vegetables. We also went to a big farmer's market where you can walk above all the pens of cattle and see them penning them on horseback then get loaded onto road trains to go to America, it was very interesting.

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Road train loading cattle at market



to go from Canada to America



Another day Betty and I went for a visit to another Mormon market with Bill and it was like a sort of Russian village, in Canada a lot of religious groups live in the old traditional way.

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When it was time to head back to Toronto Bill and Barbara drove us to the main bus station to get our bus. When we arrived in Toronto we were there for two days before leaving to come home so I had to find a good hotel for Betty to stay, I could not have her staying in a hostel sleeping in a bunk bed! We found this big fancy hotel to stay in for two nights, the first day we went up I Pol Tower, this was my second time but I wanted Betty to see what it was like, we also went for a sail round any interesting places before leaving to go to the airport.

Bill and Betty



So that was us on the way home to Prestwick Airport. I could have stayed longer and seen a lot more of Canada, you never know, I may get back sometime!