

By ANNE DONNELL

Personal writing – you know, journals, diaries, “scribbles” – can be raised above the ordinary, and that happens probably more commonly than expected. Anyway, that’s what we have here: excerpts from an excellent recent trip log kept by my childhood friend, Laura Triebold. Laura and her husband David are Wisconsin dairy farmers. She’s also a nurse with two masters degrees. You’ve heard from her before when she graciously permitted me to share some of what she wrote about one of their annual trips to Spain. This time it’s Australia and New Zealand, a trip began Christmas Eve, 2011. I love armchair traveling with them; Laura (“Lollie” to me and to her grandchildren) is very observant and checks out details. It all comes to life. The following is #12 Sticker Shock.

“Just thought you might like to know the cost of living here in New Zealand. All prices in NZ dollar; the exchange rate isn’t the best as the banks always take a fee and using our credit cards subjects us to 3.5% fee. Basically we give them 80 cents and they give us a dollar.

“Gasoline - \$2.12/liter well over \$8.00 per gallon

“Eggs - \$6-7.00/ dozen; never refrigerated in the stores, just pluck them off a shelf.

“Milk - \$2.50 per liter again well over \$8.00/gallon. Bill [a New Zealand friend they visited] sold fresh milk off the farm for \$2.00, but buyer needed to supply his own container.

“Pint of draught beer - \$11.00 Speights is their brand, but they do make a dark version.

“Liter of coke - \$2.85

“Bottle of ketchup - \$5.49

“Ground beef - \$14.00/kilo or nearly \$7.00/pound

“Shaved ham - \$17.00/kilo

“Bananas - \$2.50/kilo, makes our stop & go at 39 cents a pound sound good

“Right now all the grocery chains are running a scheme that you give them \$10.00/ week and then at Christmas time they will give you a pre-paid box of groceries. Tells you something about where the Christmas priorities are.

“Bowl of soup in a restaurant - often \$14.00

“Continental breakfast - generally \$15.00 in the restaurant

“An order of garlic bread - \$8.50

“Beef or chicken burger with order of fries - \$18.00

“McDonald's Egg McMuffin - \$8.00

“A menu favorite, Roast of the Day served with mashed potatoes and veggies - \$25.00

“Internet - generally \$5.00/ half hour

“Housing - small 1500 square foot home on small lot \$355,000 and up

“Rental cars - cheap off brand vendors \$80-100/day for short term rentals

“New Honda Accord - \$56,000

“I think I have mentioned about the motels (\$125.-\$150.00/ night). They do always give you 300cc of milk (fresh or trim) and generally have a mini kitchen in the room. No free newspapers, no free breakfast.

“Last night spent time talking to a traveling salesperson who indicated that many people are raising a family with annual salary of \$25,000.

“Makes one really appreciate the bounty of the USA.”

I appreciate the generosity of my friend, her acuity, humor, and common sense.

ONLINE DEPARTMENT “Why I Like Retirement” (Thanks, A.A.) • *Question: How many days in a week? Answer: 6 Saturdays, 1 Sunday* • *Question: When is a retiree's bedtime? Answer: Three hours after he falls asleep in the recliner.* • *Question: How many retirees to change a light bulb? Answer: Only one, but it might take all day.* • □
Question: What's the biggest gripe of retirees? Answer: There is not enough time to get everything done. • *Question: Why don't retirees mind being called seniors? Answer: The term comes with a 10% discount. Sometimes 15%.* • *Question: Among retirees what is considered formal attire? Answer: Tied shoes.* • *Question: Why do retirees count pennies? Answer: They are the only ones who have the time.* • *Question: What is the common term for someone who enjoys work and refuses to retire? Answer: NUTS!* • *Question: Why are retirees so slow to clean out the basement, attic or garage? Answer: They know that as soon as they do, one of their adult kids will want to store stuff there.* • *Question: What do retirees call a long lunch? Answer: Normal.* • *Question: What is the best way to describe retirement? Answer: The never ending*

coffee break. • Question: What's the biggest advantage of going back to school as a retiree? Answer: If you cut classes, no one calls your parents. • Question: Why does a retiree often say he doesn't miss work, but misses the people he used to work with? Answer: He is too polite to tell the whole truth. • Question: What do you do all week? Answer: Monday through Friday, NOTHING. Saturday & Sunday, I rest.