

A Drop of Culture by Anthony Fong '79

Our journey into being a homestay family at Auckland Grammar School started when we travelled around Europe in a campervan in 2019 on the way home from two years living in China. The great contrast in cultures that were now separated by borderless boundaries made it an exciting adventure every day! From Germany to France and beyond, my family were so excited at meeting different people, trying to speak different languages and tasting a variety of delicious food.



The Fong-Zhu Family on the Abel Tasman Track. From left to right - Yan, Lillie, Daniel, and Anthony

Fast forward to 2023, and the thought of learning more about another culture was answered when Carl Moritz Leuthauser landed in our house to start his Auckland Grammar School journey in Form 4. Being an Old Boy at Grammar (1979), my wife Yan and I thought it would be a great way to give back to the school and for our children Daniel (aged 13) and Lillie (aged 8) to learn more about German culture.

It took a little bit of time for Lillie and Daniel to “warm up” to another person living in their house, but eventually the children and Carl became comfortable with each other. As parents, we also had some adjusting to do as we all had to be flexible with our food choices, having another teenager in the house and the dynamics of Carl being the oldest of the three young people in our household now.

Daniel has become friends with Carl overtime as they both attended Grammar in 2024 and did the things we take it for granted to build relationships such as catching the bus together in the morning, chatting about Grammar life at night during dinner and just hanging out around the house and laughing about teenage jokes that Yan and I did not always understand but were happy to acknowledge!



Carl and Daniel catching a fish off Orakei Wharf.

Lillie has always been engaging with anyone she meets and having Carl around was no exception. Keeping Carl at attention with questions and conversations that Daniel preferred not to answer led to Lillie having another big brother around the house.

It has been wonderful to see our children adapt and accept a total stranger into their lives. We have had our moments of tension or misunderstanding as a family of five, but I feel this has made all of us a little stronger and given us a deeper understanding of living and blending in with other cultures.



Future International All Blacks Front Row! Carl, Daniel, and Lillie at Whakapapa Village - Taranaki Falls Walk

Carl mentioned that as well as a very good academic programme, the Mountain Biking Club and Tennis were also part of the attraction to attending Auckland Grammar School. The opportunity to train every Sunday morning on his bike with other like-minded young men has been such a joy for Carl as he has bonded with many of the boys over the last 12 months. Grammar Teacher and Coach for Mountain Biking Jon Hasler mentioned that "Carl has really improved his technique since starting with the Team". Thanks to Jon Hasler and Parents, Adele and Jacques Le Roux, Jarrod White and all the Parents who supported him.

As a homestay family, we have been so thrilled that Carl was able to share his passion for bike riding with a caring and dedicated group of teachers and parents.



Carl (centre) representing Auckland Grammar School at the North Island Schools Mountain Bike Championships in Rotorua.

With Carl being active with Tennis trainings and Mountain Bike riding, it has been interesting for my wife Yan who is studying Chinese Medicine and myself being a Flexibility and Fitness Specialist at Anthony Fong Fitness to monitor and observe a teenager as they push the boundaries of school work, exercise and sleep or lack of sleep. Giving advice to Carl on any sports injuries or general health is a good reminder to us what to expect from Daniel in a year or two!

We have learnt a lot about how Pretzels and bread are important in German culture and maybe Carl will take back to his home the idea of having rice and a steamed egg for breakfast.

It has been a real pleasure and privilege to have hosted Carl as part of our family while studying at Grammar. I am sure we have all learnt a lot from each other and we look forward to all our young children developing into mindful Global Citizens.



Everyone enjoying a Chinese meal for a family birthday party.

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Anthony Fong