

Back 2 Back



by Fabian K. (9b)

10th October 2007

I was looking forward to flying the first time in my life and to see my host family! I had exchanged some e-mails with them, but there had been some trouble with a spam filter... Suddenly, the aircraft's engines were started and the plane turned left onto the runway. It became faster and faster. One moment later we were in the air. I couldn't believe it! That felt so funny in the stomach!

Some minutes later we got some disgusting sandwiches. They really were. I guessed that the flavour is a mix of stinking fish, meat and dry salad



My first flight

The flight took about an hour. The aircraft shook a little bit and we landed safely in Amsterdam. There we had to find the next plane. Everybody was shocked, because the gate was at the other end of the airport. That wasn't a big problem, because they had conveyor-belts for people. Then we had some security checks, like in Bremen. After flying with a Fokker 70 to Amsterdam we entered a Boeing 757.

We had some turbulence over the Atlantic Ocean and Greenland. After some hours of flying we got a meal. Chicken with vegetables which were not identifiable ☹.

The only thing that tasted good was the ice

cream. Later we had a sandwich (I think it wanted to be a sandwich) with rancid cheese. I didn't eat it. We watched the movies "Surf's Up" and "Ocean's Thirteen". I also took some pictures of clouds with my camera.

After 8 hours in the plane we landed in Detroit. After passing some security checks, we were able to get our suitcases. There was some trouble, because there was one suitcase missing. The airline had lost it. I think it came later and the girl got it back when it was delivered to her host family's house.

In front of the airport there was one of those famous American school busses waiting for us. It took a long time to reach Jackson High, because there was a big truck crash on the highway. But finally, we reached the school after spending 2 hours in the cramped bus.

Mr. Ward picked me up and gave a welcome-bag to me. His car was a nice, black Mercury. I liked him immediately.. His first name is Joe and he's a very cool guy. He is a computer and business law teacher at JHS. At home, he introduced me to his wife Nancy, who is a teacher at an elementary school, and his cute dog Sebbi (from Sebastian).

The house is a small and nice American house which is built out of wood. The garden is big and beautiful because they have so many trees. I had a room with a big bed which was very soft, and I had my own bathroom. For dinner we had oat meal and Oreos. Oreos are filled with a milky cream between two dark-brown cookies. Oh, I love them.

This first day was very nice.

11th October 2007

I got up early that morning at 6:15 am; that was like at home. It was my first school day at an American school. But first Joe, Nancy and I had breakfast, which was oat meal again. I liked it.

We went to the Vikings store in the school. A store in a school? Why aren't we going to establish a shop in our school? That's a cool idea, because you can get sweat shirts, t-shirts

and other cool stuff with the school's logo there. But it wasn't shopping time ☺; we just got our ID-cards. Everyone in the school has to wear one. They took a photo of each of us and made the cards. My photo looked a kind of weird ☺!



The School's Fan Shop

After this procedure we entered the library, which was really big. We played cards while waiting for two American students who were going to show us the most important places in school. They told us that even American students get lost, because the school is so big. They have some very special rooms. For example the "Shakespeare Room", where they learn how to act.

The American school system is different from our German system.

They have the same lessons, which they chose at the beginning of a school year, every day. Another difference is that the poor students have to walk, because every teacher has his own room. But walking is less exhausting because they leave their books in their lockers. Later I followed Cat Schlenker, one of the American students, to her classes, which were AP Chemistry (an advanced form of Chemistry), band practice, computer classes (with Mr. Ward), and AP Economics (even advanced). The best classes were the computer classes. They were fun, because Joe (I always called Mr. Ward by his first name) is so funny. We made a cartoon, which contained him and Chuck Cunningham, who is a computer teacher, too. In the evening we had a welcome dinner at the Truman's house. The food was good and we had fun.



Brunch at JHS

12th October 2007

That morning, we met in the teachers' office to have brunch with the principals of JHS (they have one for every grade and one head principal). They had prepared strawberries, pineapples, grapes, mangos, muffins and "Bagels" (they are like donuts without anything on it). After that we visited the Jackson YMCA from 10am to 2pm. We were able to play basketball and racket ball or to go climbing and spinning.

After finishing, we walked back through the city of Jackson, which is pretty nice. They have some high houses. Back in the library we played card games with Mr. Hoffmann and Mrs. Bielefeldt. We had fun with the teachers by calling them by their first names ☺.

In the evening we watched sports on TV. First they

had NASCAR, which is car racing, but it is more fun than our Formula 1, because there are more crashes. We also enjoyed baseball and American Football of which I understood all the rules.

13th October 2007

After eating cereals in the morning, Joe and I went to a hardware store. That's like a German "Baumarkt".

I looked forward to the football game in the afternoon. The parking lot was just impressive. Thousands of mobile homes and in front of each were families who barbecued. Joe introduced me to a famous Quarterback of CMU. This guy was very tall. The game was CMU (Central Michigan University) against Westpoint (called "The Army", because it's a military university). Joe and Nancy were fans of Westpoint which is close to New York City. But CMU won with a score of 47 to 23 ☹. We had to leave the stadium early, because Sebbi was alone at home. The parking lot was full of rubbish and some seagulls which were attracted by the leftovers of the food. We were very angry about this.

In the evening Nancy made chilli and we watched NASCAR again.



My First Football Game

14th October 2007

Today I went to a golf place, where you can practice to hit the ball as wide as possible or to get the ball into a hole with just one shot. It was really fun.

In the evening we watched an exciting movie about a story of the football team of the Marshall University. They died, when their plane crashed down. Only three players, who stayed at home, were alive and built a new team. Soon, they began with the training. After losing the first match they won the game against their biggest rivals. So the story had a happy end.

15th October 2007

The group met at 7:45am, because we planned to go to the zoo in Toledo (in Ohio). But first we had to get there. They had a school bus for us and that's why the ride wasn't too



A Polarbear at Toledo Zoo



Giraffes at Toledo Zoo

comfortable. The busses are even too small for short kids like me. There were many monkeys, birds, apes and marine animals. Each of us took a lot of photos.

After this great trip, I got some Tacos with Joe and together we drove home. Those Tacos were awesome.

16th October 2007

We started the day with a tour through Jackson. We saw the city and some special places. We visited places like the town hall and the post office building (which had a fitness room). I like Jackson, because it's a nice and small town. We also visited JTV, a regional TV studio. I was going to be interviewed there.

Later, Mrs. Clemons, Mrs. Bielefeld, Nane and I were interviewed by Bart Harley, the talk show host. He asked us what we thought about the USA. He also wanted to know things about Germany and how Germans think about Americans. The talk was very good, because Bart was very interested. The sole exception was that he remembered two girls who had been interviewed two years ago. They had had their job shadowing in the studio and were surprised as they found themselves in a live show. That had been the reason for their freezing up in front of the camera. They had been shocked and hadn't said anything.

We had planned 5 minutes for the interview but instead of this, we spent 15 minutes there. I think we weren't too bad.



Jackson has some big buildings.

18th October 2007

That day we had school until 1st lunch. Then we went to the “Jackson Parlour”, a very good ice cream place, where they have special flavours like “brownie”. The ice cream was awesome!

In the evening we had pizza and salad.

I wasn't able to sleep that night because Jackson had a tornado alarm and they had very loud sirens, even in our street ☹.

19th October 2007

I was very tired because of that exhausting night. At 7pm we were invited to go through the “Haunted Theatre”, which is a cinema that was transformed into a haunted house. It was fun!

20th October 2007

That day I saw one of the craziest things on earth, “Frankenmuth”. It's a small village near Flint, which is trying to be German, but I think they just envision Bavarians when they think



Bronner's – A (Very) Huge Christmas Store

of Germans. Nancy and Joe invited me to a German restaurant. We had to stand 30 minutes in a queue to get a table in this huge restaurant. The food, which really was German, was very good and came quickly. After our dinner we went to Bronner's, the largest Christmas store on earth. It's four times bigger than a Wal-Mart Supercenter, which is big enough for people to get lost easily. At the entrance you get a little map for your orientation. They had everything, even tanks for your Christmas tree.

That's really crazy! Christmas is a peaceful celebration and even an army general should understand that.

21st October 2007

It was golfing time! But first we went to church. The service was more interesting than in Germany. There were people who had returned from a trip to India and who showed us a DVD about the people there. We went to Ella Sharp Park and played. It was lots of fun.

Joe almost hit a deer with a golf ball.

In the evening we went to church for a dinner. That is something Germans don't do. I think Americans do more things at church.

22nd October 2007

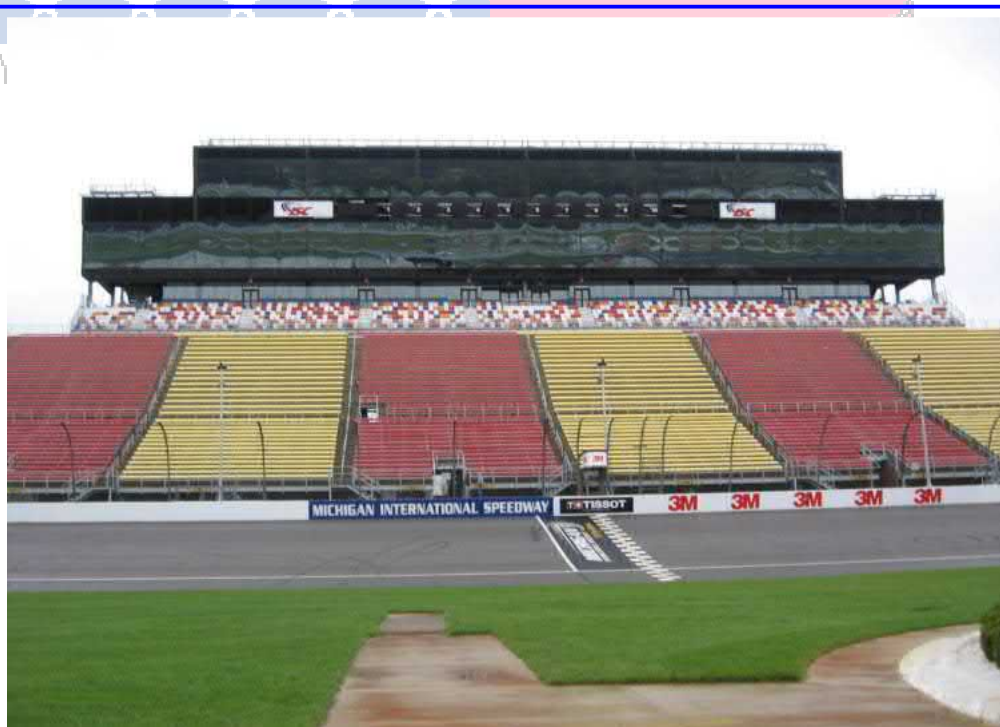
It was a normal school day, but school is better than German lessons and so the day wasn't too hard.

In the afternoon Joe took me to "The Cascades", which is a row of waterfalls. At some days they put on a light show. Mr Ward told me that it is a waste of energy, because there aren't many people watching it.

23rd October 2007

Today we went to several places:

1. We visited MIS (Michigan International Speedway), which is a racetrack in the area. We entered vans and we were driven over the track. That was really cool and Joe was very jealous, because he's a NASCAR fan who hasn't driven on the track yet. I also saw the safety car.



Michigan International Speedway

2. Later we visited Dawn Foods, which produces mixes for bread, doughnuts, cakes etc. They even provide German shops, like Backwerk, with their products. They prepared an awesome lunch for us (with pizza, cookies, brownies etc.) and the food was enough for the whole day.

24th October 2007

We went to Lumen Christi, a private, catholic high school. The male students have to wear ties and all the students pray before every lesson. The subjects are almost the same. In Physical Education I played American Football.

25th October 2007

We were taken to the planetarium at Ella Sharp Park. We watched a show about the weather. The planetarium belongs to JHS. That's special, because it costs much money. Then, we visited the Ella Sharp Park Elementary school, where we visited the German classes. Some of us read German books.

Later I met with the American who had stayed with me in the summer. We had much fun and ate dinner. They prepared homemade caramel apples, which were very good.

28th October 2007

The exchange turned out to be too short. That day we already had a good-bye party and everybody felt that the end of our stay was coming closer.

We had a little bonfire, but nevertheless it became very cold. Fortunately, there was much food ☺.

Then Mrs. Clemons took us on a trip on a hay wagon. She killed many trees, because the trip went through a little forest and the path was too narrow.

29th October 2007

Time for Chicago! I had been looking forward to this trip for a long time. We went by coach (and not with one of those uncomfortable school busses). We watched a movie on the ride. Suddenly, Chicago came into sight. The houses were very big, but then we entered the city and the buildings became bigger and bigger. The streets were dark, because the constructions rose so high into the sky.

We were lucky to go up on the third-highest building in the world the Sears Tower. After passing a security check we entered the lift, which was so fast that you felt it in your ears. I was a little bit scared of the height, but I felt safe, because you were behind a solid glass barrier. The view was wonderful. You were able to see Michigan Lake and a big part of the city. The Sears Tower was the highest building in the world, but then they built the Petronas Towers and the Taipei 101. We were on the 107th of 108 floors.

The next stop on our tour was Navy Pier, which is at the shore of Michigan Lake. We walked around and ate something. The pier is a kind of amusement park. One of the very striking things about this place is the big Ferris wheel. But the best thing was the free view on Chicago's impressive skyline, which has been compared to the skyline of Frankfurt. Everybody said that the one in Chicago is better and bigger.

Later we had a guided tour through a museum, but I think many people (even the Americans) were bored.



Lake Point Tower



The Sears Tower in Chicago



Chicago's Skyline from Navy Pier

After this, we were allowed to discover the city. We entered many shops. My favourites were the Apple store and Niketown. I also tried the new iPhone. That's very cool! You can do so many things with it. After some hours we had to return to the bus ☹, because we had to go home because the journey is long. On the road it's about 335 km. We arrived at Jackson High School late at night.



Chicago from the top

31st October 2007

Today we visited Ann Arbor (55 km east of Jackson). We saw many buildings of the University of Michigan, but didn't enter them.

After this tour, we visited Briarwood Mall, which is a mall in the town. Each of us bought something and that's better than doing the same thing in Germany, because many items are cheaper in the States. One of the reasons is the weak market value of the American dollar. Everyone had to carry big bags home.

It was Halloween and many students went to parties. That was fun, because we hadn't done that before. We got an awful lot of candies.

1st October 2007

It was a sad day, because it was the last one. Many American and German students were sad and some of them cried. Then the busses arrived and we loaded up the suit-cases. Then the sad moment came and everyone had to get on the bus. After leaving it was quiet in the bus and some of us fought back their tears with their Halloween candies. ☹

I'm going to miss all the Americans and the United States, but it was a great time and a good experience for each of us.

Some of us made plans to organize an own trip next summer so maybe we'll be back.

