

## **Back to Back 2009**

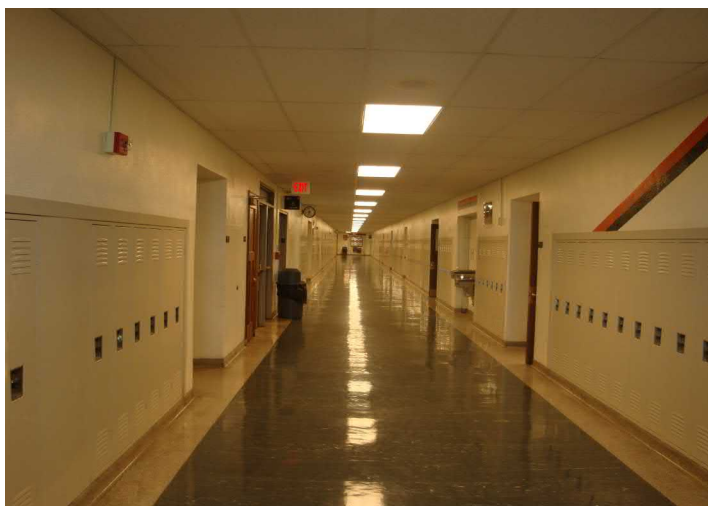
von Charlotte Cordes

### **September the 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

On Thursday we all met early in the morning and waited for the bus to take us to Bremen, from where we wanted fly to Frankfurt. From there we had an 8-hour-flight to Detroit. It wasn't the first time in a plane, but I find it always horrible to sit for such a long time in a small seat and watch TV. While a few girls next to me feared a plane crash ('We will crash! Everyone will die!'), I was a bit worried about my host family. I didn't know whether I would get along well with Jessica (my exchange partner) and the whole situation of being "alone" in a different country for three weeks, but finally we reached Detroit where we were picked up by a bus, of course a yellow one! After about one hour we arrived at Jackson High School and met our exchange partners and their families. I was positively surprised and not even very tired.

### **September the 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

.First day in school! Everything was very exciting and different. It's easy to get lost at Jackson High School, because it is so big and the corridors all look the same. In every classroom you could find a computer for the teacher and a TV. Even in the cafeteria there were eight TVs which were never used. The huge canteen was full of people at lunchtime (there are three lunchtimes!), but unfortunately you couldn't buy



anything healthy and the portions were very small.

The pupils are very nice, they're out-going and everyone wanted to know who I was and where I was from. It was a bit weird, because I got so many compliments about my clothes and my looks. I think Americans just say those things to be friendly and to start a conversation, but that's okay. I noticed that the pupils at this High School can take funny subjects like crafting or working in the library and many other different things. Some of them sound a bit weird. In Germany, you could never take "Library Work" as a subject. I am not sure if I like this system, because you don't really *learn* in the library, although it is a good thing to do.

After a while, it was a bit exhausting to listen to English all the time and to talk sense with the Americans.

In the evening, we went to a Welcome Dinner at the Lumen Christi High School, where we ate a lot of delicious food and breathed helium out of balloons. That was very funny!

After this dinner, Jessica's Mum, Amy, drove Jessica and me to the Cascades where we met some Americans with their German exchange partners. It was a big, beautiful man-made cascade. You could sit on chairs and watch it while listening to music.

Suddenly, an old woman came to us. She told us that she heard we were Germans and that she just wanted to talk to us. Then she told us for five minutes that she believed in god and that she was an angel. It was so hard not to laugh!

### **September the 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

This weekend we went to Ann Arbor to meet Jessica's family and to see a football match with them. On the one hand, the match was exciting, but on the other hand a bit boring, because it was so long and the atmosphere wasn't as good as in a soccer stadium. It was very exciting to see everything around this big match between Michigan and Indiana. The fans celebrated their team in the whole town. Even my host family unpacked a tent, a table, chairs and much more. Everything had the blue-yellow 'M' – for Michigan – on it.

After the match, we went to Jessica's grandpa where we spent the night. The next day, the aunt and the uncle who we had met the day before came again and we ate with them and celebrated the birthday of Jessica and her aunt.

In the afternoon we left and I was shown a town called Frankenmuth, which is a "German" town.



There was a Bavarian restaurant and a "Glockenspiel". The whole thing wasn't really German, but it was very interesting to see the American way of presenting Germany.

The last thing we did was visiting Bronner's Christmas Store. I was overwhelmed of the gigantic house full of Christmas goods. I saw so much weird stuff in the store!

### **September the 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

This morning, we got our ID-Cards by which you can be identified as a student of Jackson High.

We had to wear them around our necks and if you didn't wear them, you were in trouble. That's another thing that is really different in Germany and I didn't really understand which use the cards had.

While waiting for the cards a friend gave me his carrots. They were in a little bag made of plastic and had the size of my little finger. That was a bit strange, but the strangest thing was that they tasted like plastic or something chemical, yuck!

There wasn't any event this day, so we just stayed at home.

## September the 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Today we went to "Dawn Foods" which is a factory that produces mixtures for donuts and other pastries. After the guided tour through the plant we could eat donuts which was the best part of the little trip.

Afterwards we visited the old prison of Jackson. In the prison they had a gallery where they showed some paintings. A friendly woman talked about the prisoners and how they had lived there and some really funny stories about ghosts. She even believed in ghosts and said that she had a photo of herself and three ghosts - which I found a bit strange. All in all it was quite interesting in the museum, because the woman knew how to make things interesting.

So far I had met a woman who believed she was an angel and another one who believed in ghosts and I wondered who was coming next.

## September the 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The weather in Jackson was getting colder and colder and I loved it so much! In Germany it rains more, that's annoying.



The German group and a few Americans visited the "Ganton Car Museum" where a very rich man displayed a (private!) collection of 53 cars, a Coca-Cola-Collection and dolls. Some of the very old cars were over a hundred years old and he even had a copy of the "Back-to-the-Future-car", that was awesome!

Thereafter we went by our nice yellow school bus to the "Flavour Fruit Farm" at which the best apples in the world are grown (We were allowed to taste them.). There was also a corn maze which was very funny, because we lost the way and didn't want to use the official ways, we laughed a lot and I think it was one of the best

things we did.

On the way back to the High School we made a stop at a mall where some of us went to "Maggie Moo's". That's a special ice cream parlour and I liked it very much, but I learned that American sizes are very different from German sizes. I ordered an American "mini" and got a German "medium"!

## October the 1st, 2009

Today we went to the YMCA, a fitness studio in Jackson, where you can find many opportunities to work out. There was a swimming-pool, many gyms, an indoor track, of course a room full of machines, a lot of other rooms I can't describe and you could climb and play squash and basketball etc. It was a lot of fun to move and play with the others. In the fitness center, they had a little snack bar where I ate a huge delicious sandwich, the best I had in America since we had arrived!

I thought it would be nice to meet some Americans or Germans in the afternoon, but Amy used the car every day to drive to her work, so Jessica couldn't have taken me to visit anyone, that was a bit sad.

## October the 2nd, 2009

A rainy day, very cozy. In the morning, we went by bus to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. A very old German teacher who had gone to the university herself – 1000 years ago she said – told us about the buildings of the campus we could see – or could not see, because it was so rainy. After the tour we went to Briarwood Mall in Ann Arbor and everyone was very excited happy to go shopping. Shopping in big malls is very easy, because you don't get wet and the stores are very close, although I love to go shopping in the city with all the different stores and boutiques, it's just much more charming. On the tour back I fell asleep because I was so tired.

In the evening I met the father of Jessica who was very friendly. We went to eat sandwiches (mmh..!) and after that we wanted to see the football match of the Jackson High School. It was quite boring, but very funny, because we met all the other Germans. Afterwards Jessica's mum drove us to Brady's house where they had a bonfire. We saw many Germans and Americans again and had a lot of fun! The bonfire was definitely one of the best things.



## October the 3rd, 2009

Finally, I had a good night's rest! That was great. The night before I arranged to meet some friends in the Westwood Mall and we managed to shop for more than four hours. I was totally exhausted after that. In the evening a friend of Jessica's came and we watched a movie while eating pizza - a nice and relaxed Saturday.

## October the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009

This day, church was on the family's schedule (Just two projectors this time!) followed by a church breakfast.

About midday Amy, Jessica and I went to a "Fall-Festival" where pumpkins and too salty popcorn were sold and you could see how the people lived in this area of America a hundred years ago, which was very interesting.

When it started raining we went inside the "Ella Sharp Museum". Borrrring! That's all I have to say. I think it's really practical that you can find a water dispenser in almost every public building -in the school, in the fitness center etc...

## October the 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The week started with a day in school. I met the others again in room 129. We were divided into groups of four pupils and were told to prepare a German lesson for little kids at the Middle School, that sounded exciting.

After that we went to Westwood Mall and the "Parlor". The Parlor is a quiet famous place with nice red seats and old-fashioned accessories. We ate a "Mini-Sundae" and once more I got the feeling that Americans have a different notion of "mini". Five pupils ordered "Dare to be great", which contains 21 scoops, nuts, cherries and much more you don't want to imagine. At the end, there was just a soup of everything left.

This evening, I tried nachos. That was the first time in my life and I was surprised that I liked them.

## October the 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Today we visited the planetarium of JHS. We were all impressed that a school had an own planetarium. There was a teacher who told us some really interesting things about the universe, but I just couldn't understand how some people see whole men and animals in a few stars.

Afterwards we went to the Elementary School where we wanted to teach the little kids a bit of German. They were so sweet!

In the afternoon we didn't do anything – again.

## October the 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009



Chicago! We were so excited! Finally we sat on the bus, 300 miles ahead. But the ride was funny with all the other people, so after a short time we were on top of the hugest tower in Chicago. It was an amazing feeling to stand in a box of glass and to see all these long streets in the sunlight with little cars and the blue lake!

By coach we went to a museum. First place to go: Mc Donald's, what else? Then we had 45 minutes in the museum, but my group just wanted to push the buttons to hear the ducks croak, it was very funny! We were too silly, so at the end we just relaxed on a bench and that

was really necessary, because afterwards we went shopping which was very exhausting. Our group was too big, everyone had different idea on where to go and all in all it was funny, but very stressful.

## October the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009

It was hard to wake up this morning because I was so tired and the day in school was quiet boring.

In the afternoon there was nothing to do so I went by bike to a park to go jogging. I really missed sport! It was chilly outside, but it was good to run and not to think about homework.



## October the 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009

This morning the seniors of JHS had to go the auditorium. There was a man who wanted to sell a lot of stuff like pullovers, T-shirts, jewellery and cards for their graduation. The pupils spent a lot of money on these items, which I found a bit strange. The man was a real entertainer and he made the pupils believe that they really needed all this stuff.

In the evening, Amy drove us to a football game of JHS and it was so chilly again! After that we went to the "Rock and Bowl". We got pizza and drinks for free, but unfortunately there was no rock music, so it didn't deserve its name, but we had a lot of fun, although I was very, very bad.

### **October the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Yippee! I slept until half past 10, it was really necessary. Around midday, Layne and Henrike picked me up. Together we went to the Coffee Shop. I drank something very delicious although I wasn't sure whether it was coffee, but there was a really nice ambiance. Afterwards we went to two antique shops. I saw some really nice things, but everything was too expensive. Layne showed us the theatre of Jackson. I was overwhelmed! It was a huge old hall with red seats. Awesome! Unfortunately I couldn't take a picture, because my camera didn't work.

In the evening we watched a movie and ate sandwiches. Americans really know how to do them!

### **October the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Church, again. At 7:30 am! And after the service we had to listen to a man who talked with all these old people about the bible, one hour! I wanted to sleep and I didn't understand a word. I was in a very bad mood.

Then we went to a farm where pumpkins were sold. We bought some very nice and big specimen. We carved them in the evening and gave them faces, it was a lot of fun. At home I always forget to do it. America is famous for Halloween and I'm so glad that we were not there for Halloween, so I didn't have to go to one of these parties.

### **October the 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

This day was very empty, there was nothing to do and school was boring. In the evening we went to a mall to buy a bag and some food for the plane.

### **October the 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Today, "job-shadowing" was on the schedule. I went to a protestant elementary school and kindergarten. The kids were very cute and friendly. They prayed a lot and there were just 12 kids in a class which is very good thing, I think.

At 1 o'clock I was home again and started directly with baking a cake and pancakes for the "Good-bye party". I finished everything at 5 o'clock and was very stressed and annoyed. Unfortunately, Jessica couldn't help me, because she was ill. In the evening, I went with Jessica's father to the "Good-bye party". It was a nice ending and the people brought delicious food.

### **October the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Last day! We were all excited and a bit sad, too. But we didn't have much time in the morning to be excited, because we visited Northwest High School. Northwest is a school in Jackson, but not as big as JHS.

Some pupils greeted us with self-made posters. Every German went with a pupil of Northwest High School to his lessons. Northwest had nice gardens and good food! I was with Katie in a Math lesson and it was *so easy* for me to answer the exercises and I'm not good in Math, not at all. Some pupils were even *older* than me and it was just so easy. Unbelievable... If I went to this school I could get an A.

Everyone was very friendly and I noticed again that there were a lot of cool subjects. Katie had a subject where they read literature by women. But I got the feeling (again) that the pupils didn't pay much attention to their teachers although the lesson could have been quite funny.

**This evening I packed the last things into my bag and I was happy to go home, although it was a great time in America! I had been in America two times before, but this time was very different, because I saw it from the inside. I had to be out-going and open, whether I wanted to be out-going or not and I wouldn't have thought that I'd learn so much English in this short time! All in all I had an awesome time, a lot of fun and had many new experiences (I think about the woman who said she's an angel...).**