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Bison, cowboys and me

After a twenty-hour journey, I arrived at Laramie on the 19th August 2014 and spent the first night at a small hotel. The next day, I met Sarah, who is an employee of the International Office of the University of Wyoming and responsible for the exchange students, and we did some organizational paperwork and a tour of the campus. Furthermore, we went to my apartment and to Walmart. She was a great help. I was totally surprised about the vastness of the area around Laramie and the size of the campus, but Laramie seemed to be almost a ghost town, because there was nobody in the streets. At night I went with my roommates Shawn and Skylar, who is a Navaho, to Applebees to eat dinner and become familiar with each other. During the introduction days for international students (28th and 29th August), I got to know other exchange students from the whole world and we listened to presentations about the different institutions and programs of the University of Wyoming. I decided to participate in the Cowboy Connect Program, which brings international and American students together, the Family Adoption Program, in which an international student get “adopted” by an American family to get another insight into the American society, and the Outdoor Program, which offers different hikes and climbing tours. On the 1st September, Laramie changed totally, because 12.000 students arrived and the campus seemed to be bursting at the seams. The classes started on the 3rd September. For my first semester, I chose a class about Shakespeare’s comedies and tragedies, an introduction to Chicano culture and literature, a writer’s workshop about magazine writing and a Spanish speaking class about the cultures of Latin America. I was very satisfied with my classes and my professors, although I had to do a large amount of homework and papers. But, I learned a lot, have found many friends in my classes and my efforts paid off for me, so that I finished all my classes with an A.

During the semester, I participated in a three-day trip to the Yellowstone Park, which was organized by the International Office for the exchange students. It was a great time. The first night we spent in Jackson Hole, which is a beautiful small city with nice shops and great restaurants. The next day, our first stop was the Grand Teton, where we saw our first elk and did a hike around a wonderful lake and later a boat trip. After that we went to the Yellowstone Park by our overheated bus, because the air conditioner did not work. There was a great tumult in the bus, when we saw the first bison, because everybody wanted to take a picture. At 5:00 pm we arrived at Old Faithful, where we split up into smaller groups to see the

smaller geysers and hot springs. When my friends and I entered a small group of trees, we almost bumped into a huge male bison, which stood in the middle of the path grazing. We froze immediately and went back very slowly to a place, which was secure and where we still had the opportunity to take great pictures. After this close meeting with the bison, we saw the explosion of Old Faithful, which is very impressive. The last day of our trip, we spent in the bus.

Some German friends and I organized a trip to Mount Rushmore to see the giant sculptures of the heads of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. When I saw them for the first time, I was a little bit disappointed, because I had thought that they would be bigger. But during a hike, we got closer to the sculptures and I realized their giant size. We spent the night in Rapid City, which is a nice town with interesting bars. The next day we went to a zoo, which is called Bear Country, to see black bears and grizzly bears, later to Devil's Tower, which is one of the most important sightseeing spots of Wyoming, and back home.

For Thanks Giving I was invited by Skylar's girlfriend, Brooklyn, to stay with her family. We went to a big family reunion in Gillette, where we ate a traditional turkey, ham and mashed potatoes. The food was delicious and I had a lot of fun with the family. Brooklyn, Skylar and I stayed some days more in Gillette and they showed me the town and we went to the cinema to see Hunger Games: The Mocking Jay.

During the weekends I often stayed with my family from the Family Adoption Program to cook together, do hikes and play games. I went to the theatre with my host mother, Amy, and my host father, Ned. We hunted their Christmas tree with their son, Gus. Another great activity is to go to the different sport events of the Wyoming Cowboys. Regularly, I went with my friends to the volleyball, football and basketball games. Although the football team almost lost all their games, there was a great atmosphere in the stadium. Right now, the whole university is hoping that our basketball team, which is very successful, will enter in the March Madness Tournament and will play against the great teams from the East and West Coast.

In general, I am very pleased with my studies and my life in Laramie, Wyoming, and looking forward to the next semester. I want to thank you again for your support, which made my stay possible.