

Novemberleben in Norddeutschland (November Life in Northern Germany – by Lucari Jordan 2015)

Winter in Estorf is much different than any winter I have seen in New Mexico. Most people here are disappointed that there is no snow on the ground and that it still reaches 15° C. However, I enjoy the morning fog rising from the meadows on my bike rides to the bus and have welcomed our two snowy days that gave me a wonderful opportunity to photograph the red “Vogelbeeren” (bird berries) on their frost covered branches. The quiet in the countryside – which can have a powerful, soothing effect - makes the world seem peaceful even though it takes only a short bicycle ride and then 15 minutes by bus to reach the main strip of Nienburg.



After my great “Herbstferien” (fall vacation), I was in some kind of a daze for a week or two. Although I would have liked more time to travel around, I got – somewhat reluctantly -- ready to tackle schoolwork again. As I have mentioned before, one of my favorite school activities is the “Rudern AG” (rowing club) because I’ve never been able to do this in Las Cruces due to our regrettable lack of a river [full of water during all seasons] and also because I can do it well. When the weather is nice, it’s wonderful going out on the Weser River for a time and enjoying the self-produced breeze on your face as well as the river atmosphere. When it turned cold, we began training inside for the next season though I could stand a little more training and a little less “Völkerball”, which is a popular German game akin to dodge ball. However, some intrepid souls persist in rowing on weekends. We have different workout activities, do chin-ups, inverted crunches, practice on rowing machines and also with medicine balls. I have made several good friends among the “Ruderer” (rowers). [Note: “ASS” is the acronym for my school, Albert-Schweitzer-Schule. “ASS” actually means “ACE” in German.)



On Wednesday evenings and on weekends, my host family and I frequently play badminton in the village community center. Movies are also pleasant to watch as a family; we like to watch the famous German series “Tatort” every weekend. The other night, Wolfgang (my host father), Simon (my host brother), and I saw the new James Bond movie, Spectre. Most foreign-made movies are dubbed into German. I find it funny when the lips of the actors and their speech are not in synchrony, but this is normal for the German audience and they hardly notice. Sometimes we take the train to Hannover, the capital of Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony), which is just 30 minutes from where we live. We also like to invite friends to come over to our house and play board games. A favorite is “Die Siedler von Catan” (The Settlers of Catan), which was developed by a German game designer and has become popular all over the world; the game has been translated into 30 languages. My host family, our friends and I play it in German, of course. Wolfgang is an expert settler, building and developing holdings while trading and purchasing resources. He or Simon are the usual winners, but I – through careful observation – am improving my settling skills steadily. On weekends, we also like to order “Dürüm”, a Turkish/German specialty. It’s made of lamb or chicken broiled on a vertical spit and sliced into thin shavings wrapped in a tortilla-like flatbread.



On November 26, my host family and I were invited by the “Freundeskreis Las Cruces-Nienburg” to their annual Thanksgiving Dinner, which was served in a very nice restaurant. We were seated at the VIP table together with Mayor Henning Onkes, his wife, and the Chairman of the Green Party in Nienburg with whom I had an especially interesting discussion. Hermann Martens, who back in 1987 started the German-American Partnership Program (GAPP) youth exchange at Albert-Schweitzer-Schule which then partnered with Mayfield High School in Las Cruces, came from the city of Oldenburg for the celebration of this event in honor of our sister city relationship. (The Las Cruces-Nienburg Sister Cities partnership developed out of the student exchange.) I ate a lot that night and had several helpings of sweet potatoes. We didn’t have a whole roast turkey on the table, but the sliced turkey meat tasted delicious. I was just a little surprised by the stuffing that resembled more of a bread pudding.

