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2012-13 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

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5-7-2013

## Busy, Busy, Busy Little Bee

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## Busy, Busy, Busy Little Bee 05/07/2013



*Campfire with International Students*

Hei Hei,

I can't believe it's May already! The month of April seems to have flown by much too quickly. As soon as I got home from travelling with my grandma and aunt, I went into planning mode. My friend Zalika and I held a joint birthday party in the common house in Breisas (my housing area) for ourselves since both our 21st birthdays happened over the Easter Holiday. It was a huge success and I think everyone had a lot of fun.

After the fun of the party, I had to jump right into doing work. April was filled with deadlines for papers, assignments, and tests. I spent most of the second week in April studying and writing a group term paper. The studying was for my Tourism and the Environment final. Final exams are very interesting here. They are administered by outside proctors (versus the professors themselves). We were put in a really big room and spaced out, with all our belongings against the wall. We had to have our student ID's on the desk so that the proctors could come around and assign us a number. We couldn't put our name down on the exam, only this number. I am guessing that this is to prevent bias when the professor grades them. Though all the exams are graded by two people (so our professor and then someone else in the department) and they decide on the grade together. The exam itself was all essays, so each page we used was a set of carbon-copied paper that we had to separate out at the end into different piles. We did get to keep one of the copies, which was nice. At Linfield, final exams usually stay in a professor's office, not given back. This was an interesting experience, definitely different than home. I think I prefer home better, just because you take the exam in the same room as your class is and it's more familiar. Plus, the professor can answer any questions you have on the spot. In this exam, if a student had a question, one of the proctors had to go ask the professor. The rules surrounding the exams are obviously quite strict. The proctors wouldn't let us leave the room at all during the first 30 minutes and then after that if you needed to use the toilet or go on a smoke break (which exists here), the proctors would follow you to the bathroom or outside to ensure that you weren't cheating. It's quite different.

After I finished my exam, my focus turned to a group term paper for my business class. This was a new experience for me as well. I've only done group papers a few times, but never a term paper that was the entire grade for the class. It was challenging to coordinate, but it was a learning experience. I got to work with someone that had English as a second language and not a first and so I think it was a good experience for both of us. We got the paper in just fine and then had to do a presentation for it.

As a break in between all these things, some of the international students put together a gathering. They got funding from the housing office here and decided to go out into the woods and build a campfire for food. We didn't actually camp, just brought lots of food and had fun. I helped collect fire wood (so I felt somewhat useful). I learned a bit about what the friluftsliv students have done when they go out camping. This was a much needed break between all the serious assignments and tests. To me it seems like most of the semester is carefree for students and then as soon as Easter break is over, students crackdown and get to business. This is different from the US, where I think we are in crackdown mode a lot with various major projects and tests spread out through the semester.

I also had the oral part of my Norwegian mid-term. This was the most nerve-wracking exam/assignment that I have had here. Trina and I paired up for it. We had to give some sort of presentation to the class. Together we put together a game of "Norsk" Bingo. We made the cards with pictures and then created dialogue between ourselves. The class had to listen to our conversation and pick out words for which there were pictures. It ended up being a lot of fun and was very interactive. This was my test in April so I was very relieved for it to be over.

My Telemark class went on a study trip to the adult education building/program here. We had discussed before class (and read about) immigration in Norway and the different issues immigrants face today. The class we went to at the adult education center was a group of refugees from various countries that were granted immigrant status to come to Norway. As a condition of the status, they all have to learn Norwegian. We broke up into groups of students from our class and refugees. In my group, our two guests from Eritrea spoke better Norwegian than English, so our conversation was mostly in Norwegian. Since I don't speak that much, I mostly listened (Meg translated a few things for me), but I was surprised at how much I actually understood. We talked about many different things including politics, religion, economics, Norway, and the Norwegian lifestyle. It was a very neat study trip!

Throughout the last week of April and into May, all the graduating high school students celebrate their upcoming graduation. This period is known as "Russ" in which all the students participating basically have two weeks of party time. They all get this red or blue (I've heard of black too) overalls that they wear for a couple weeks straight. I've been seeing Russ students everywhere! I feel like they've taken over the town. But it is cool to see such a unique tradition (which is something that I don't think exists in the US).

I feel like there were probably more events and things during the month of April, but things are starting to blur together. Mostly I remember these few experiences from the month and all the good times I've had with friends. We've shared a lot of meals together and have game nights quite frequently. These are what I will miss the most when I go home.

Thanks for reading! My next entry will detail my mom's visit to Norway!

Ha det bra!

Amber Hay