

Watermark/Germany 2003-04 Journal

Date: 9/23/2003

Submitted by: Kat Goglin

Journal Entry:

It has begun! Watermark- Germany is now officially on the road! Training has been exhausting at times, but also a blast. I will miss many of the new friends that I have made, but I also look forward to seeing how God is going to use them this year. I am so thankful for all the time and effort so many people have given to teach us the things we need to know. The first few days on tour have been great, wonderful churches, terrific people, awesome host families! My team is marvelous! God has been teaching me a lot about how to rely on Him and on His strength. I am still not used to the busy schedule, but I am sure that will come in time. Cathleen should be starting German lessons for us soon. I am excited for that, but also a little nervous. I know it will be much easier learning with the rest of the team though; it was so hard to try to do it on my own. Oh, and learning bass guitar has been an adventure! I was really nervous at first, but now I love it! I find myself getting thoroughly disappointed when we have acoustic programs or rehearsals where I can't play. J

There is a verse that I would like to share with all of you that just keeps popping up on team. James 1: 2-3 "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance." Pure joy! -- Kat Goglin



Kat Goglin

Date: 9/25/2003

Submitted by: Pat Torbit

Journal Entry:

As I sit in this cozy home, surrounded by the lovely members of Kindred, I sip my coffee and reflect on the past week. It has been a great, yet tiring week. We started off in Inver Grove Heights (a suburb of Minneapolis) by doing Sunday morning worship there. My team last year, (North Central) had been to this church and I was able to stay at the same host home this time that I stayed at last time. Very cool. After that, we went to St. Olaf College and performed a Sunday night program there. It was fun, but by the end of the night we were really tired. Monday and Tuesday were light days and we didn't have too much to do. Wednesday night we had a family night concert. It was lots of fun and great people. Wednesday night it came to be time to do our puppet show. Our puppet show at the current time is based on the verse from 1 John, "Perfect love casts out all fear." There are four characters in this puppet show, a young boy (Steven Curtis), his pet monkey (Chapman), a grandpa (Grandpappy), and finally a scary monster shark (scary monster shark). Sune portrays the scary monster shark and scares and makes on average of at least 3.3 young kids per church cry. Lil K portrays the monkey who says no words, has just a squeaker and is interpreted by Steven Curtis. Dave portrays Steven Curtis and finally I portray Granpappy. Dave likes to have "fun" and throw in extra lines so that I have to try to improv on the spot. So this time I thought I would get him. Steven Curtis is taught a new memory verse each night from Grandpappy, and it just happens to be "Perfect Love Casts out All Fear" every night. So I (Grandpappy) thought I would put Dave (Steven Curtis) on the spot by asking him if he remembered what last night's memory verse was before I told him the one for the night. So I ask him. I am grinning because I know I've got him. There is no possible way for him to get out of this. "Grandpappy I forgot, can you refresh my memory", Steven said. "No, Grandpappy is getting old and forgets too Steven," I said. Once again, Dave gets the prize, I thought I had him, but I'm just going to have to think of something better. Well anyway, I hope everyone is doing well. Thanks for all the support. This year is going to be amazing not only being able to be in the States but to be in Germany, and some other European countries. Take Care and maybe next time I will have a funnier story? God Bless. PAT 1 Tim 6:12



Pat Torbit

Date: 9/27/2003

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos
Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ:

What an amazing journey and we have only just begun. The first five weeks of training were incredibly intense. I have truly been shocked by all of the heartfelt testimonies that God has led members of this years teams to share. My heart aches and my eyes well up with tears at the thought of how my life has already been touched and changed in the short amount of time I have known these Christ-driven people. I can not even begin to imagine what this experience would have been like had just one person chosen not to accept this years calling. Our God truly is an amazing God that provides all our needs and surrounds us with his love. I don't know what I expected team to be like. However, I do know that God is challenging and stretching me in more directions than I ever thought possible.



Martha Mitkos

So, this year I am spending an entire year, traveling in a van, with six wonderful people. During this time a lot of very interesting quotes can pop up unexpectedly. On September 27, 2003 we were traveling from Brooklyn Center, MN to Minot, ND. For those of you that do not know, this is a 10+ hour trip. We were all at varying levels on consciousness throughout the trip. After stopping at a random rest area somewhere in the North West Kat asked Pat, "Are you going to be the NAGivator, Pat?" Not that our navigators are particularly naggie, but it is their job to keep the driver awake and alert. Later during that same journey Kat was looking for one of her books and climbed onto the back bed where Pat was sleeping. Pat awakened by the movement, asked Kathleen what she was looking for. Her response, "I am looking for A Love Worth Giving." You can only imagine the look on Pat's face as these words exited Kat's mouth. After a few moments of hardy laughter, she finally revealed that she was looking for a book written by Max Lucado.

I think about my Grandmother daily and her desire for me to be able to serve God in this capacity. I thank God for revealing his will to me and leading me to serve this year with Youth Encounter. I thank God for my family and friends, my praise band, my friend Aaron, the youth and all of the members of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church that have helped me grow in my faith and have supported me in my walk with Christ and this ministry opportunity. God has blessed me in a multitude of ways. I pray that God will open wide my eyes to see his great works in my life and in the lives of those around me and I pray that my ears will be open wide to hear his calling. God's Richest Blessings upon you all.

In His Service,
Martha Mitkos
Watermark-Germany 03.04

Date: 9/30/2003
Submitted by: Sune Beck
Journal Entry:

Dear Diary,

We have just left the small but wonderful city called Minot, and right now I am trying to look back past the last couple of days. After a very long 10 hours drive, we finally arrived at the Lutheran church late Saturday night. Our host home families were there to pick us up, and for the first time I was supposed to stay alone with a real American family for a couple of days. Soon I began to realize that I could put all my nervous feelings away and be my self, because family was so nice to me. That night I had a very long but nice conversation with Carla, the mother of the house. We went to bed about 2.30 am, and I was supposed to meet the rest of the team at 8 am at the church the next day.

On the road we are used to stay in a lot of different churches several times a week, I could definitely feel a special atmosphere from the very first time that I entered the door to that church in Minot. I felt that we were welcome in a warm and different way. The church was quite big and the pastor was so awesome and musically gifted, when he grabbed his Martin & Co. guitar at the second service and played and sang, it automatically turned your lips into a big smile... A voice inside my head kept telling me that my body was tired from a lack of sleep from the night before, and even



Sune Beck

with a little help from the good American Starbuck coffee, I just knew that it was not enough to keep my concentration high during that very tough day. For lunch we had pizzas from an unknown but local place in Minot. I don't know yet if there was a something special added on the top of those pizzas, but one thing that I know for sure was that I was given a lot and enough of new energy to keep my concentration and motivation high for the rest of that day, -anyway sometimes God has a cool and funny way to show His blessing in our lives.

We had 2 early services with the Sunday school, we spend 2 hours at the YMCA with the kids and at 7 pm we had our program. The program was a big success and the church was filled to the limit of a lot of smiling adults, parents and friends who was invited for the program.

Monday was our day off. I woke up about 1 pm by the sound of a guitar playing. The oldest son Brandon was taking his lunch-break at home. Still not awake, I opened the door to the garden to sit in the sun with my coffee. Forgetting the many warnings, and locked my self out.... Hmmm, me barefoot and the dog, locked out... In the very same moment, I heard Brandon's car start and I realized that my second chance was gone too... GREAT...!!! I had to leave the dog and walk barefooted to the local elementary school where the host mum was at work. Off course I had to say hello to all the Carla's colleges before I could get the keys to the house, but maybe now I understand why many Americans are calling people like me, "stupid Danes".

Date: 10/3/2003

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

Greetings!!! Its October 7th and we,re leaving Yellowstone National Park heading towards Idaho, but for the sake of this journal, it's October 3rd and we,re in the small farming community of Circle, Montana. Yes, you guessed right, I got too caught up in the God's amazing beauty in Yellowstone to write my journal from last week, so I'm going back in time to recall the wonderful times we had in Circle, MT. God's good!



Cathleen Gosselin

Circle is a small farming community in eastern Montana with a population of about 800 people that does a very cool thing with their youth! Once a month about a hundred youth from all the different churches in the area gather in the name of Jesus Christ, drop the divisions of denomination, eat a good meal together, and hang out with each other. We did a family night program there and we had a blast! Martha gave a powerful and sincere sharing about God's good plans for our lives, everyone else shared during the program with a glue (a short tie-in between songs, honoring Christ with personal stories and words from Scripture), and we got to do a new song! It was awesome to look into the eyes of the youth during the program and see God working in their hearts as they got to sit back and listen to His words of love for them, as they got to dance knowing that there is freedom in Christ to live life to the fullest, and as they got a chance to let the Holy Spirit speak words of truth into their lives that God is crazy in love with them and that He has good plans for their lives! After the program Sune asked me to give him personal lessons in how to smile at people during a program. I told him that I just look around and watch God move in people's hearts and smile because it's such a beautiful thing to see. Pat added that it's fun for him to find the people who look like stones and then to just bust out a huge smile in their direction. God works in wonderful ways in the hearts of His people! It's an honor for us to be used by Him.

As for me personally, I'm doing well. God's doing a lot of good things in my heart, teaching me to bring everything to Him in prayer, every frustration, every joy, every struggle, and every beautiful moment. God blessed me abundantly in Circle when we learned a new song called Nothing For My Journey. This song has special meaning for me because it's written by my friend Mike from St. Olaf and it ain't no ordinary song! It's touched my life a lot as I've been learning over the past 2 years that I am really weak, but God is very strong! I'm learning that in life it's okay to admit that I'm weak and that God is the only one who can love me and sustain me like I need (and in that is the greatest power!). So as the song says, and as my teammates so wholeheartedly sing and play: I'll trust in You, I'll open wide, Lord let Your strength flow deep inside, cuz I am weak and I am small, but You are God. God is definitely bigger and more glorious than anything in this world and it's an honor to travel around, play music and share that life-giving message with people!

Date: 10/4/2003

Submitted by: Dave Hougum

Journal Entry:



Dave Hougum

So, I feel like Doogie Howser because I am writing a journal for all to see...and yet I am not a child prodigy doctor...instead I am, (drum roll mistro) a Youth Encounter teamer. So, my journal begins with Red Lodge. Now, if you're not familiar with Red Lodge, well then here's the delio (a.k.a., the deal). Red Lodge is not a lodge, as you might have guessed, but rather a really cool small city in South Eastern Montana somewhat near Billings. So, Martha, Kat, Cathleen, and I went on a outdoor hiking adventure into the unknown wilderness. After traveling for about an hour and on the famous "Bear Tooth" road" we had officially done it...we had reached Wyoming. Realizing that we really didn't want to be in Wyoming, we turned the big red machine (our van, which I guess is more like Clifford the big red dog...you remember the books!) and headed back toward Montana. We saw a really awesome lake in the distance and we thought, "Oh, it's really close." Well, the truth is, that distances are deceiving in Montana. It took us forever to get to the lake. There were some pretty big snow and ice patches on the mountainside, I did my best penguin impersonation and slid face first down the mountain. That was ridiculous. From there, Cathleen and I decided to climb up the mountain on our own, because we thought just being around 10,000 feet just wasn't good enough. That's when I realized, I am not, and never will be a Sherpa. I was breathing so hard that if I had been one of the seven dwarfs my name would have been Weezy. I guess that's what happens when you grow up in the city of Soldotna, Alaska...elevation 0. To all the people in Soldotna and surrounding areas, and anywhere else too, I give you my love and thank you so much for your support!

Other than that excursion, we have had a few programs, and are really coming together as a group. I find myself being pretty versatile, playing a lot of piano, some guitar, and even some lead vocals. Whenever we do sing-a-longs with the kids I like to do my craziest rock star moves by jumping off of chairs and stuff like that. Team to me is like being on that crazy show on MTV called "Road Rules" but with a Christian twist. We have the adventure, the drama, and fun all combined into one crazy team spreading the love of Jesus Christ wherever we go.

It's weird to think that I pretty much live in a van....down by the river. Ok, so it's not by a river yet, but maybe one day it will be (it's an old Saturday night live skit for those who are confused). Everyday I wake up and I think, "Am I really doing this?" which is immediately followed by the question, "Where am I again?" I swear, I have never seen so many fields, and cows in my life as I have in the last week. I guess driving through North Dakota and Eastern Montana will do that to ya. It's like my retinas are forever burned with the impression of wheat and cows. Ok, on to other things. There is a rumor that we may be going to Yellowstone National Park for our day off so that could be pretty cool. That would be the bomb diggity.

I knew being on team would be challenging...but this challenging? Krikey! Sometimes I wonder what I was thinking signing up for this and other times I know exactly what I was thinking. It's all good because I know God is with me in the valleys and on the mountaintops, which I have seen many of already. Well, this is lengthy already and I could write much more. I'll leave you with this thought: we as Watermark could use a sound tech. If you are a techie, a trekie (maybe not), or somebody who likes to have fun with sound and go on crazy adventures in a big red van, then we have the position for you. So come join the party, come join Watermark Germany.

Peace and love from above,
Dave Hougum

Date: 10/7/2003

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

This week we have been traveling across the great state of Montana. The majority of our time has been spent driving and sleeping on the floors of churches willing to open their doors to us so that we may have a place to lay our heads. This was very frustrating for me. While I know God has a reason and a purpose for everything I couldn't understand why we were having so many housing only churches. I wanted to do programs and share our ministry with others. However, God opened the door to a new kind of personal growth and appreciation for his power and majesty.



Martha Mitkos

This past summer I was sitting in a pew at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Iowa City, Iowa listening to our pastor preach about "Oh, MY God!" moments. For those of you unsure about what I am writing an "Oh, MY God!" moment is when you experience God's amazing power first hand and as you stand in awe with your jaw dangling you can't help but say, "Oh, MY God!" As I was listening to him describe the overwhelming feeling of seeing God's amazing works with his own eyes I was searching my own heart for any "Oh, MY God!" moments. For some reason, I could not seem to find one. I knew that somewhere in my twenty-six years of memory there had to be at least one, if not many "Oh, MY God!" moments. This past week I have had more "Oh, MY God!" moments than the memory board of my brain could possibly handle. Here are just a few:

1. I stood within fifteen feet of a 12-point Elk Buck.
2. I drove through the bottom of a canyon surrounded by mountains towering thousands of feet about me.
3. I climbed over 4,000 steps to stand at the top of Mammoth Hot Springs bubbling with steam.
4. I walked along a wooden bridge to see mud boiling up from the earth below me.
5. I sat on a plastic bench for over an hour waiting to see Old Faithful burst up from the ground.
6. I leaned over the edge of a cliff to gaze at the beauty and splendor of the rushing water and powerful waterfalls.
7. I hiked down a mountain to get a closer look at the falls (and then hiked back up again).
8. I felt the sun's warmth and the wind's cool breeze.
9. I sat by a river and watched God's creatures being refreshed.
10. I stood in silence at the top of lookout point hugging Cathleen and praising God for the work he does in all of our lives.
11. I felt my heart pound out of my chest and my breath quicken and knew that only God could create a being so intricate in detail.
12. I said "Oh, MY God!" more times than I could ever begin to count.

I challenge you to experience the amazing world around. Whether you see the sandy beaches, the rolling hills, the great plains, or the majestic mountains know that OUR GOD has created these for you and to say, "Oh, MY God!" you are so majestic and I stand in awe of you and your creations.

In His Service,
Martha Mitkos
Watermark-Germany 03.04

Date: 10/9/2003

Submitted by: Pat Torbit

Journal Entry:

Welcome to Oregon – a small sign just said. I sit here in the van (Sune pronounces V's as W's, so we adapted that grammar for the year) sipping on a frozen coffee slushy realizing how much I drink coffee. I find myself having up to 5 cups of coffee a day. Recently, that's all I have been finding myself doing in a day. To clue everyone in, we haven't had a family night program since Circle, Montana, approx. 8 days. Since then we were able to hang out with a chill youth group in Bozeman, Montana – and we were able to share in Worship with a church in Billings, MT. Since Circle, we have had 2 host homes. One in Idaho Falls, and one in Twin Falls. The host homes were amazing for all of us, great



Pat Torbit

people. God is good. The night that we were in Idaho Falls, Sune, Dave, and myself were all staying in a host home together. It was about 10p.m and the three of us Watermark guys and our chill host sister were all relaxing, watching Arnold give his acceptance speech of winning the position of governor of California. So naturally we started trying to think of who Sune looked like. Someone said Matt Damon from Goodwill Hunting, then George Clooney from every other 5 movies out there, and then Brad Pitt from the Mexican or from Ocean's 11. Brad Pitt was getting close we decided, but we hadn't quite nailed it yet. So out of nowhere Dave says "I've got it. Colin Powell!" (Secretary of State). Sune hesitates, and says "NO WAY! I don't where glasses!" Those glasses, always the difference. Well we have been having a good time, and we have enjoyed meeting new people and talking with them. God is present among all of this, and God has a plan beyond our understanding, whether that means doing programs or just having housings. It's time's like these that I'm reminded by the words my Dad's favorite singer Allison Krause, "There is a Reason for it all." God's got it. 1 Corinthians 14:33.

Thanks to everyone for their prayers, and support. I truly appreciate it. God Bless. PAT -

Date: 10/16/2003

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:



Cathleen Gosselin

We made it to the coast! Woo-hoo! After traveling together for 4 weeks through the plains of North Dakota, the continued plains of eastern Montana, and majestic Beartooth Mountains in southern Montana, Yellowstone National Park, Idaho (where we saw more Mormon temples than potatoes), and the rich Redwood forests of southern Oregon we are now in the state of California and we got a glimpse of the rocky, powerful, refreshing Pacific Ocean! What are your initial observations about California, you ask? Well, apparently hitch-hiking is legal here (have no fear, we are not exercising our freedom in that area!), hippies are still alive, surfers are pastors too, the breeze is warm, the salmon is fresh, it is quiet and peaceful up in northern Cal, and overall it is wonderful here! Our first stop in California was at a nursing home in Fortuna. We arrived and were overjoyed that we had an opportunity to play music again, after 2 weeks with less than a handful of bookings, we finally got to play together again. It felt so good to praise God with our voices and instruments again...and we found ourselves smiling and filled with peace as we sang for the residents at the nursing home. They were pretty excited too and my heart went out to them as I watched them sitting there listening. We sang a bunch of our program songs and we also sang Amazing Grace like 4 times, because it is the only song I could think of that they would know that we know too...it was wonderful to see some of the folks singing along and to see others just smiling. God was warming their hearts with His love and He was warming ours too by letting us be there and share with them. We have been learning to work hard and to rest hard. When we work, we work...setting up our sound system without a sound tech. has been a 2-6 hours process each day with highlights like our speakers being on fire and smoking 2 hours before a program, a constant loud buzzing from our monitors, and the system randomly not working, but God is SO good and faithful to us and each night we have had a wonderful, functioning sound system! When we rest, we rest...God's given our team a lot of time to rest recently, and we have spent a lot of time hiking in the woods, a lot of evenings to sit and read and talk with host families, and Martha, Kat and I are reading a wonderful book about being of woman of God that is teaching us so much as we think about marriage, dating, being a woman after God's own heart in this world. God has totally blessed us with a lot of time to rest and grow as we prepare for our new sound tech Steve to come on Friday and begin again as Watermark Germany...a team of God's kids, going out in His power to share the love and forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ with the world. God's good! I love it!

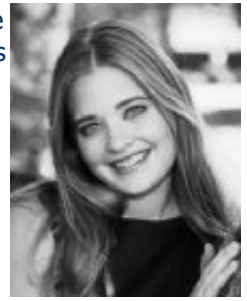
Date: 10/21/2003

Submitted by: Kat Goglin

Journal Entry:

So I am writing this as quietly as I can so I will not wake up Cathleen. This year I am learning so much about my teammates and my friends but most of all myself. I think being on team has brought out who I really am. I have learned the most about me, and

I am pretty weird. Yes, it's true, I did not know that before. Cathleen's friend, Erin made a comment about me to her. Erin has seen me maybe a few days and her observation is "Kat always seems like she's looking for something." I was thinking a lot about that, and it is SO TRUE! I am the most scatterbrained person I have ever known. I never knew that before. Maybe my friends and family knew it, but they never told me. Also, I am surprised at what kinds of things upset me and what doesn't. Maybe my team is getting to know me at the same time I am. Oh, and I found out today that I am a somewhat shy extrovert. It is true, it is possible to be a shy extrovert. My life makes sense now. But I think the most important thing that I have learned so far this year is that a little sacrifice can show someone else God's unconditional love. We are not always happy with circumstances, we may not understand the reasons why certain things happen the way they do, but God knows, and if we let Him, He will use us to show His love to others. That amazes me. That is why I am here.



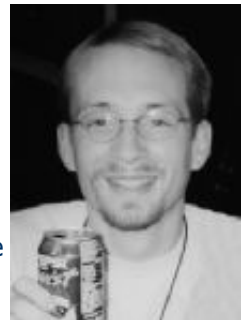
Kat Goglin

Date: 10/28/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

So there I was, sitting peacefully at home watching TRL. (Actually, it was the news; I just wanted to see if you were paying attention.) It had been about 10 days since I got home, my days in direct ministry with Youth Encounter seemingly at an end. After two years on team I volunteered at training for the 2003-04 teams, helping mostly with the sound techs but getting to know just about everyone. After a quick stop at cross-cultural training to share my first team experience with this year's Watermark Germany, I joined Captive Free Northwest on the road for five days for some further training (as is usual for teams). Next came an 11-hour drive home, then it was time to begin the job search and get on with "normal life" outside of team. Or so I thought. Ten days after getting home I got a phone call and three weeks later here I am as one of those I had just trained, receiving the training I had just led from the person who called me, serving on the team I was just trying to book at my church. That's right, I'm back – year three is underway, and for those who are wondering I have no designs whatsoever on Potsko's record.



Steve Ellwein

Last Friday I boarded a plane in Minneapolis, departing at 6:30 a.m. After a brief layover in Seattle, the plane touched down in Portland and I was warmly greeted by my new team (thanks for the signs!). We climbed into literally the same van I had last year and started driving, ending up in... Everett, about a half hour north of Seattle. (In its own way, it makes sense.) We had a little time for rehearsal on Saturday, which was good since Saturday and Sunday were my first programs with the team. We have been in the near Seattle area over the weekend, and today we picked up Jeff (Youth Encounter's recruitment director and therefore the one who called me three weeks ago) to begin our on-the-road training. Our next program is not until Friday, which means Jeff will not be able to see our program but we will have plenty of time for the sessions and such that normally take place. Most of that training time was spent today with one on ones, my first with the team. On one of them those of us who were walking around Puyallup got to see one of the most spectacular sunsets I've seen in a while, filling the entire sky with vivid colors – I don't normally interpret those kind of things as direct signs or confirmations, but it sure can't be a bad sign and I am feeling even more reassured tonight that this, in a way I could not have imagined a short time ago, is where I am supposed to be.

The month of October has basically been a big reminder that God doesn't work the same way I do (which is a good thing, by the way). Two years ago, with only a few months on the road behind me, a second year of team was a real possibility that ended up coming to pass. Last year, the thought of doing a third year never seriously entered my head. I went through our return tour and debriefing not knowing quite what was coming next but looking forward to being settled for a while (and possibly making a more direct use of my degree). Now it's back to exactly the opposite – volunteer ministry, not staying in one place for more than a few days at a time, spending another birthday and another Easter out of the country, much less not at home. Why? Because I love this ministry and I have been called to it. Even though this wasn't my idea this time, so to speak, and it didn't even strike me as a possibility a month ago, I firmly believe that God is calling me back to the road, back to the northwest U.S., back to Germany (and on to the new territory of the just-confirmed

Czech Republic and Romania), back to living from a van, a suitcase and the generosity of strangers, back to family night programs and one on ones and call-ins and everything that team life implies. It's a road I've been down before and it's what I have been used to for the last two years, but at the same time it's completely different. This is a different set of people (as all teams are), a set which has been working together and getting to know each other for over two months already, seeing me only during rehearsals and whenever else our schedules intersected during training. My stepping in makes it a new situation for my teammates as well, and so the process begins anew of discovering how this incarnation of Watermark Germany 2003-04 will work together and relate to each other. There are reasons for my being here that go beyond this team's need for a sound tech, and over the next nine-plus months we will discover what those reasons are and, by God's leading and through his Spirit, do some great ministry and have a lot of fun in the process. And so it begins (again)... – 1 Samuel 3:8-10

Date: 10/30/2003

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last Friday night Cathleen and I were spending some quiet time at our host home writing letters and sharing how God has been revealing himself to us in our lives. I was telling her how grateful I was that during the course of the past few months God had reminded me of the love that he has shown me through his Christian followers these past few years. Reflecting back, I recalled a conversation that was had over popcorn in the upstairs apartment of a friend. As I was spilling out my heart, my fears, and my joys I felt this amazing sense of peace fall over me. I knew that God had placed these dear friends in my life to show me the true unconditional love of Christ. I glanced out the window and the rain was flowing like a river washing away the tears and the pain and mending a broken heart and creating a fresh start in my walk with Christ. While reading the 17th chapter of Jeremiah I came across the 14th verse, "Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise." This is my prayer today and everyday.

Throughout our lives God presents challenges and opportunities to make a choice. One path will lead to a closer, intimate relationship with Christ....the other uncertain times. Because of the free will that God has given us it is our responsibility to walk in discernment. Be steadfast in prayer and trust in him.

Saturday morning I awoke early while everyone was still sleeping and walked outside to see this amazing view of the Puget Sound. I spent the next hour running the hills of Everett, WA and praying and praising God for providing healing, new growth, and reshaping me into the woman he intended me. Take a moment and read Jeremiah 18:1-7. Even though we may choose a path of uncertainty God is calling all of his children back to him, including you and me, so that he can reshape us as it seems best to him. I pray that God continues to provide insight into his will for my life and continue to reveal himself to me through his love and faithfulness.

In His Service,
Martha J. Mitkos
Watermark~Germany 03.04



Martha Mitkos

Date: 11/4/2003

Submitted by: Dave Houglum

Journal Entry:

So I woke up today in a town called Chimacum, Washington. It was a steamy 27 degrees, but hey, I'm from Alaska...I'm used to the cold, right? Sorry, I had to throw out that line, as it is a line I commonly use when I am rejected from girls for dates. I've been staying actually with an amazing family called the Piccini family: Pete, Linda, and

Maggie, who, happen to have lived in Nikiski Alaska, which consequently enough is about 25 minutes from my hometown of Soldotna.

We had the opportunity to do a really great family night program the night before at the church called Lutheran Church of the Redeemer and even had a great turnout...great being over 2...actually there was probably close to 100 people there, ranging from 8 to 80. If there's one thing that I've found as a sign of hope so far is the uniting power of chewing gum. At this point you may be saying, "Dave, chewing gum? Are you crazy, son?" Well, yes I am crazy...and don't call me son. But, I have seen people of all ages... and I mean ALL, squawking like a rooster and flapping their wings! God bless the "Chew My Gum With God" song.

From Chimacum, we made the trek in our big red van, which we call Big Red (so kiss a little longer...but not on team, we're like family here, so let's keep it a family show), to Concordia Portland University in Portland, Oregon. After meeting our contact Heidi, we went to the Old Spaghetti Factory. I love that place. And here's the interesting part, as unpredictable as I normally am, I always eat the same thing at almost any Italian restaurant: spaghetti with meat sauce. That's a "the more you know" fun fact I guess. From there, we went to the university and there, we stayed with some students in the dorms. I got to stay with a bunch of cool guys and get to find out about what's been going on in their lives. And then I did my best pool shark impression... or more like pool minnow. As I was spending some quality time with the students, I totally got schooled by the guys I was playing...but I guess I didn't need a self-esteem anyway. So that's all today...and what a day.

Since it's been a while since I last wrote, I just have to say how amazingly blessed I have been by people these past few weeks. During these weeks, I have been able to tour in the places where a lot of my relatives (Everett, Washington), and friends (Pacific Lutheran University) live. They were extremely encouraging...extremely, and blessed me probably more than they will ever know. I have had people travel hours to stop by and see our group perform and see how I'm doing and pray with me. I've really never felt so much love and support in my life, and I will never forget it. So thank you all for showing me so much love.

I'm learning a lot lately. It feels like the learning curve in my life has skyrocketed lately for many reasons. I've definitely been seeing many types of families and people and one thing that I am really learning is that I want Christ to be the center of my marriage (maybe I should think about step one...getting a date) and family. I'm also learning the very important value of relationships and support. I've been very guilty of trying to do things on my own, but I'm learning that #1 I can't do it on my own, and #2 life isn't meant to be done on my own. It's hard to have a party by yourself. I'm really trying to make an effort to involve people both in my successes and struggles. Speaking of struggles, there is a song that I have been listening to on repeat for the past few weeks called "I Still Believe" by Jeremy Camp which really explains the state of my heart and life right now. Our band will actually be performing it soon and I will be leading it vocally and on piano. Here are the words:

Vs. 1: "Scattered words and empty thoughts, seem to pour from my heart. I've never felt so torn before, seems I don't know where to start. But it's now, I feel your grace fall like rain, from every fingertip, washing away my pain

Vs. 2: Though the questions still fog up my mind, with promises I still seem to bear. Even when answers slowly unwind, it's my heart I see you prepare.
But it's now, I feel, your grace fall like rain, from every fingertip, washing away my pain.

Bridge:

Well the only place I can go is into your arms and throw to you my feeble prayers.
In brokenness I can see that this was your will for me, help me to know you're near.

Chorus: I still believe in your faithfulness, I still believe in your truth. I still believe in your holy word, and even when I don't see, I still believe.

Even when we don't understand what God is doing, or why, I'm learning above all to trust Him and know that He is the one with the plans, He is the one who works all things for good, and He understands even when we don't. God is for us, even when we can't immediately see it.

Peace and love from above,
Dave



Dave Hougum

Date: 11/11/2003
Submitted by: Kat Goglin
Journal Entry:



Kat Goglin

So it is me and the girls staying in a room at the Comfort Inn in Spokane, WA. (Courtesy of the wonderful, amazing, spectacular Mr. Torbit) I was minding my own business standing watching television when out of nowhere Cat says, "Stay there" and continues in rushing towards me and tackling me as we crash onto the bed. Joy radiates from her face as she asks if she can do it again. I really enjoy bringing joy to others so I allow her to tackle me over and over again. Martha lays on the bed watching for a while until she decides that she wants to get in on the fun. So Martha dashes towards me. Now the difference between a tackle from Martha and one from Cat is that Martha seems to toss and tackle. She catapults me forward as I fly through the air hoping that I still land on the bed. Don't worry, I did. Cat then wanted her chance to be the tackling dummy so the crazy cycle continued and Martha and I took turns clobbering her, she loved it. It really was fun! I love my girls! Just one of the many unforgettable experiences on team!

Date: 11/13/2003
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

Watermark's week began in the Evergreen State (Washington, that is), specifically in the city of Spokane. We spent Sunday and Monday evenings at the Comfort Inn (thanks again to the Torbits) in lieu of actual housing having been rounded up for us. Sunday's drive from Burns, Oregon was long and took its toll on us, but I guess it was worth it to be in Spokane on a day off – Dave got to see his brother at Gonzaga University and the rest of us had supper with my aunt & uncle who live there. This was after a few of us saw the final installment of the Matrix trilogy, which despite the reviews I would still recommend seeing (if you've seen the others first), although I think I have to see it again to make sure I caught everything. Tuesday took us to Camp Lutherhaven (Dave's stomping grounds for the last five summers) in Coeur d'Alene (meaning "heart of the all"), Idaho for more housing. We did manage to make some progress toward reducing the mess in our van and also had a team meeting. It was a difficult one, but things were said in the open that needed to be and if those things are taken to heart by all of us we will be a better team for it. I guess you could say that both of the day's major activities were cleansings of sorts.

Yesterday (Wednesday) took us on a little drive to Orofino, our current location. Judging by the scenery, the Gem State is appropriately nicknamed (Idaho, that is). Lutherhaven is a beautiful place, and the final approach to Orofino was as well. U.S. Highway 12 hugs the river as it winds its way through 43 miles from Lewiston to Orofino and beyond (actually the flow is the other way as we are still west of the Continental Divide), with a few small towns and sportsmens' access points along the way, and overall it was another reminder of the simple yet powerful truth that God does very good work. God forbid that we should need reminding of that, but sometimes it hits us in ways more meaningful or noticeable than when we are not in situations like sitting in a van with nothing better to do – or, more accurately, with fewer of the things in life that distract us from God's glory.

Housings and scenery-induced musings aside, however, today was eventful in and of itself. It began with some parts of our usual routine, some of which are more routine than others. We had some job time – time to stay up on the various tasks associated with the business of this ministry. We did a couple of one-on-ones, which are among the most vital times we have for team relations as well as helping us continue to get to know each other as individuals in addition to teammates. We did some rehearsal, which because of the large number of housings we've had lately has been rather hard to come by, at least in a fully-set-up fashion. We even managed to squeeze in an actual program, our first of the week. Even though some of us felt like we weren't exactly clicking on all cylinders during the program, people still came up to us after it was over to tell us what a blessing we were – another reminder that God works in us through our weaknesses and sometimes despite

them.

Two other fun things we learned today: the family with whom Dave and I are staying has a son in his first year of college. Turns out Dave knows him from Lutherhaven, but the story got even stranger when we found out that he only did training at Lutherhaven and was actually a counselor at Lutherwood in Washington, where my previous team spent a week this summer, which means that I knew him as well. We also got confirmation of what we had been fearing. Next weekend Cathleen will be leaving us for the weekend to attend a wedding, and as she was making her travel plans she was advised to fly out of and into Billings, Montana. Well and good until we found that a program had been scheduled for us on the day of her departure in central Wyoming, a trip of 5-7 hours according to various estimates and depending on routes and weather conditions, which at this time of year starts becoming a bigger factor. So, the rough outline of next week looks like this: on Tuesday we drive from Twin Falls, Idaho to Billings (about 10 hours) for housing and to drop off Cathleen, who will stay in Billings another day before flying out Thursday morning. On Wednesday we go to Wyoming (the aforementioned 5-7 hours for a total of 15-17 compared to about 8 to go directly from Twin Falls), on Thursday we have the program, and on Friday we drive 5-7 hours for what is currently scheduled as a program and lock-in in...Billings. This is one of those situations that tests our belief that all things happen for a reason and hopefully makes us put our hope in what we learned earlier about God working through our weaknesses. Since I'm in something of a "Lord of the Rings" mood from watching "The Two Towers" with our host family tonight, I think it's only fitting given the week ahead to close with a reminder – to our readers and to myself – that "not all those who wander are lost." – Romans 8:28

Date: 11/19/2003

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

As I travel through the blustery northwest with my wonderful team, I'm experiencing the truth that when Jesus says that He's always with us (Matthew 28:20), He really means it!



Cathleen Gosselin

We've been traveling hundreds of miles each day to different churches, meeting different people, sleeping in different beds, and I haven't felt alone. This is strange to me, because it seems like there's no stability within team life other than our beautiful van and trailer, my 6 teammates, and Jesus Christ. But as I'm learning, Jesus is enough to make us feel completely at home wherever we are.

As our schedule becomes a blur and I forget what city I'm in, Jesus Christ has become even clearer to me. As I meet tons of new people and share with them the love of God and what it means to follow Him our lives and to trust Him completely, I am overwhelmed by how many people there are on this earth and how much each of us needs Jesus, and in the midst of that mind boggling experience, Jesus Christ is becoming clearer to me. As we travel each day trusting that we will have a place to sleep and food to eat, and as I realize that traveling light is much less burdensome than having a lot of "stuff", my life is becoming quite the opposite of what many people consider a "good life" to be, and I'm realizing that Jesus is the only thing that I have that will never go away. As I miss my family and friends at home and my boyfriend in Africa, I see that God is drawing me closer to Him and to my teammates, to live to the fullest no matter where I am or who I'm with, because like Jesus said, He really is with us always and that makes all the difference. As everything I once knew is being taken away from me I am left with my Lord and the fact that He is always with me...and I'm seeing in a new way that He is enough!

How does He show me He's with me, you ask? Well, it's in everything: it's in the joy I feel each morning when I wake and get to see my teammates! It's in the joy I am surprised by when we meet our host families and they want to give so much to us even though they don't know us. It gives me joy when we give programs and the Spirit of God works in the hearts of His people through our simple music and skits. What I'm realizing is that it gives me joy to have Jesus Christ as my Savior and to know that He is much bigger than this world and anything in it, and that He loves us

with a love that changes our whole lives and that is never-ending.

So when He says He's with us, He really means it. Even in this crazy life style called team, Christ is constant and He fills us with joy in little things throughout the day. I know that even when I go home after this year, no matter where I live for the rest of my life, no matter who I'm with, or what God has me do He will be with me and fill me with life and joy. So I'm not afraid. I want to move mountains for my God and speak His name over all the earth, because even in the depth of my heart, He is there. That's pretty cool!

There's an old song that I vaguely remember:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,

Look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,

In the light of His glory and grace.

Try it...look to Jesus and let everything else fade away. Give Him the chance to be everything in your life and He will surprise you with His love. It's pretty amazing!

in the love of our Father that's blowing me away, Cathleen Gosselin :)

Date: 11/20/2003

Submitted by: Dave Hougum

Journal Entry:

So there we were in the middle of Wyoming...and when I say middle, I mean middle!!!! All of a sudden, smoke erupts from the undercarriage of our vehicle, appropriately named "Big Red" (well at least by me.) You would think that we might have known something was wrong when the interior of our van started to smell like a steel mill on fire...but no. As the navigator, I instructed Pat, "Captain, you need to pull over." He replied, "I'm giving her all she's got!!!" Ok, so it didn't exactly go down with that dialog, but pretty close. It was actually more like our development skit. Someone said, "Our van is on fire, I said, nah, the youth are on fire, we pulled over, and from there, our great adventure began. As the smoke erupted from the van, we noticed a thick black liquid protruding from the bottom of our big buddy, Big Red. After calling the office and talking with Lt. Dan (much like in Forrest Gump, but with more appendages) we decided to gun it to the next town about 15 miles away. There was a funny noise. We knew we needed to get it fixed...but by whom? My degree is psychology was not going to fix the van this time. So, what we did was we pulled over to a local repair shop, had the guy look at it, only to tell us that he couldn't do the work, and that our van might make it 1,500 miles, or might not make it out of town. Hmmm....if I could have pulled out the little jingle from NBC's "The More You Know" public service announcements, I would have. So, we decided to bring it to the Youtz Ford dealership in town, which also fixes vehicles. Being only about 25 miles from Lander, Wyoming, our current destination, we made a gutsy call. "Big Red," our baby, our friend, our noble steed, was loaded onto a tow-truck (Olson's Trucking, to be exact...not the Olson Twins though) and Pat and Steve joined me inside the cab of the tow-truck while the others went off shopping at Wal-Mart due to lack of room in the tow-truck. Personal aside: "Nothing like shopping to get your mind off present challenges." Back to our regularly scheduled journal...

The mountains glistened in the background as we drove with our newfound friend, the tow-truck driver. As we ascended up and finally over the hill, the mountains stood like giants in the distance as the sun was setting on another day, and the song "A peaceful easy feeling" came on the radio. I knew right then, that everything would be alright, even though there was a 5 ton van starring down my neck as I turned around. Good thing we were safe. I'm already thin enough! As we made



Dave Hougum

it to the Ford dealership in Lander, many of us had a tear in our eye, knowing that parting with Big Red, even for the night, was hard. I gave him a soft kiss on the bumper, and said, : "Hopefully see ya soon big guy" and that was that.

Now's here's the problem. You might say, "Dave, it looks like you already have one." Well, we do, but wait, there's more! It looks like our van will not be fixed until Saturday.. Ok, that's a problem. We had a program scheduled about 6 hours away in Billings, Montana on Friday!!!. So, we had the option of renting a car, sending 4 people to do a program and lock-in, and then drive back (because the state of Wyoming apparently has no rental cars where you can drive one way!!!!), and then driving another bunch-load of hours to our next destination in Laurel, Montana. And, here's the kicker, a snowstorm is blowing in tonight, and there is a forecast for a plethora of snow (up to a foot in some areas where we'll be rolling through.) So, our program in Billings was unfortunately canceled. I wanted to go for it and do it, but not everyone on the team was down, so that was that. In other news, our 7th teammate Cathleen is currently not with us. She's at a family wedding in Minnesota for the 3-4 days. Hope you catch the flower bouquet...then again, like you need it. This would never have happened if Cathleen hadn't left and gone to her wedding in Minnesota. Where are you Cathleen!!!!!! Big Red always did love her more than anyone else. Just kidding...

Will Watermark ever make their exodus from Lander, Wyoming? Will "Big Red" ever be back to his original status as road hog of the West? Will Watermark Germany sleep on another church floor? Find out next time. Same YE time, same YE place. .

Peace and love from above,
Dave

P.S. – We have a new item on our needs list. It's called a rear differentiation for our van. Please bring all donations to Lander, Wyoming.

Date: 11/29/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Life on the road is not like life anywhere else. We come to know this as early as training through sessions and hearing of the experiences of others, and we come to understand it ourselves almost as soon as we actually get "out there" (here). Of course, the Watermark-GCRR (that's Germany, Czech Republic, Romania) version of life on the road has been fairly atypical in and of itself. One of the brochures we put on our display table describes a "typical week in the life of Captive Free." (Okay, we're not Captive Free, but it's basically the same thing for this leg of our tour.) It paints a somewhat busy picture – family night programs or youth nights each night except Monday, worship on Sunday, assorted nursing homes, school chapels & detention centers throughout the week. Sounds great, doesn't it? Actually, that's almost as busy as we'll be overseas. Here in the U.S., however, we're not exactly living up to the brochure. As best as I can tally everything, by the time our fall tour ends we will have had 28 evenings of programming and 41 of housing (6 of each followed by Sunday worship; days off not included), plus a small handful of nursing homes and chapels, making the fact that my journal falls on a day we actually have a program something of an event. We were called to do ministry, and it is sometimes frustrating to not be doing that much of it (even host home ministry does not exist on the occasions when we are "housed" on church floors). The miles add up as well – just shy of 400 miles per evening of programming by my math – taking their toll on us and the van. (For those who are wondering, we did manage to leave Lander, WY with our own van, one day and one rear differential later than anticipated, and despite going through a truck wash that day the trailer hitch and back of the van still smell like differential fluid.)

Still, despite all of these frustrations I have felt incredibly blessed to be a part of this ministry again. Already I've returned to a few places I visited last year with New Vision – a third visit to Port Hadlock, WA, where I remembered the way to my host home from nearly five months ago; a fourth visit to Laurel, MT, where I received a greeting similar to Norm on "Cheers" as I made my way down to the basement; and tonight a third visit to Cleveland, MN (which really confuses people if we don't



Steve Ellwein

mention that it's in Minnesota, only six miles from St. Peter and the Gustavus campus), where they were talking about adding on to the church last time and this time I got to see the construction well underway. We've stayed in a lot of great places, and we are grateful for them all whether they are homes, camps, church floors, the Comfort Inn, etc. Many places have graciously agreed to take us a day early or keep us a day late due to our slow schedule, most recently Lander, where all the host families kept us an extra day as we waited for our van to be finished. This week we had the opportunity to spend three days, including Thanksgiving, at Cathleen's house (Maryland two years ago, then Montana, now Minnesota – at least I'm getting progressively closer to home for Thanksgiving, and I've got the M-state thing going). A great dinner, a revolving door of family and friends (25 people in the house at one point), a little football on TV, crazy games of Four on a Couch and Apples to Apples, an excursion with Kat, Martha and Cathleen's friend Liz where despite my first visit having been 7-8 years ago I (along with Kat) finally rode the Mall of America roller coaster for the first time (not much to get excited about except that it's in the mall, but still fun), a third visit to a nursing home in Waconia and much more combined to make one huge blessing. Next week we go to Sioux Falls and I get to spend three days at home and show off my city a little, and after that it's only a few days until our mid-winter training begins and we see all of the other teams again. That may be a little strange but a lot of fun – most of them know me as one of the training staff people, but I'm in a new (to them, not me) role now.

Speaking of mid-winter...just over a week remains now until our mid-winter program, at which we will make a live recording for the CD we will carry overseas (we won't carry the all-team CD since in Europe Watermark is the only name that is recognized). We may have some opportunity for re-recording the next morning, but basically we only get one shot and that is what will be a lasting representation of us to German, Czech and Romanian audiences, so we have been rehearsing whenever we can to make sure we have everything right, even songs the team has been doing since training. We'll be nervous, but hopefully excited as well. After mid-winter and Christmas break we make our way to New York, and on January 19 we fly from JFK Airport to London to Praha (Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic) and our overseas tour begins. Again, nervous but excited – the pace of our fall tour has not exactly prepared us for the pace of overseas ministry, but we know that even though it may be rough going at some points God will give us the strength/endurance/energy we need and amazing things are in store. Schedule frustrations, vehicle troubles, 14+ hour days coming in less than two months – whatever setbacks we encounter, God is present and blessings beyond what we could expect or deserve continue to be showered on us, making the good far outweigh the bad and enabling us (if we are willing to let go of the latter and embrace the former) truly to "trade our sorrows for the joy of the Lord." – 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

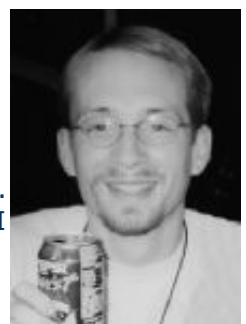
Date: 12/31/2003

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Back to the old routine and on the edge of something new...Watermark GCR2 (that's Germany, Czech Republic, Romania) has returned to the road after our Christmas break. Many of us went home and some went to other places; personally, I did a little of both. I spent the first week at home, and most of that recovering from the nasty cold I developed at mid-winter training – for the first two days I literally did not leave the house. Shortly before Christmas my parents, my grandfather and I converged on St. Louis to spend the holiday with my sister, brother-in-law and four-month-old nephew, who I saw for the second time (the first time being when he was three days old). The end of the break was a little crazy, celebrating Christmas, flying from St. Louis to Omaha and driving from Omaha to Sioux Falls the next day, packing well into the night, and leaving early the next morning to return to Minneapolis, pick up the van, pick up the team and get back on the road. This two-week period we are in looks a little different for us – normally our tour takes us around the northwestern U.S., but our Jan. 19 flight to Prague leaves from New York, so we are making our way east. It's unfamiliar territory for us as a team, but it is ground I covered on my first team and it gives us some new opportunities as well.

Our first stop after leaving Minnesota last Saturday was Iowa City, where Martha was just before the year started. We helped with Sunday morning worship at her church and got to hear some stories from Aaron, a Kindred alum from a few years back. From there we went to southern Illinois,



Steve Ellwein

just east of St. Louis, to where Martha's family lives for a program at the church where her father is the pastor. On our day off most of us went into St. Louis for some close encounters with the Gateway Arch, the Fudge Man at Union Station and the Hard Rock Café, where we were joined by Martha's friend Tracy who treats us far better than we deserve (thank you!). From southwest Illinois to Wabash in northeast Indiana and the home of Pat's former teammate Sarah, whose house I stayed at twice on my first team before she was on team. If you couldn't tell, nearly all of the places we have been or will be at in these two weeks involve some sort of familiarity or reunion for one or more of us. The program in Wabash was a lot of fun, thanks in large part to the presence of Captive Free West Lakes' Kyle and Tracie, Seth from last year's Southwest (with whom we spent some time in Washington last October), and a group of girls from an area detention center which we will actually visit on our return tour in May. I also tried out a new sharing, which I hadn't really expected to do but just sort of happened during the program (a.k.a. impromptu speaking), proving once again that God knows what He is doing even (especially) when I don't.

Today brought us to Battle Creek, Michigan, the breakfast cereal capital of the U.S. (Sadly, the museum was closed due to the New Year's holiday.) Our contact (a New Vision alum from when YE's own Jeff was on team) had previously informed us that the church we are at is on the conservative side, so for tonight's New Year's Eve worship service we had to be rather careful about our song selection – we tried to get a mix of hymns and more relaxed worship songs. The program after the service was a little more free-form. All that aside, the highlight for me was that a member of my first team decided to make the trip to come and see us. Our slide show (trust me, this is related) doesn't have pictures of us since we haven't been there yet, so we use slides from previous teams. Somehow, when the slide selection was made they were all from the team that she and I were on. It was a lot of fun and also very moving to watch someone else watch the slide show who knew the people, places and stories behind the slides and reacted to them out of the same knowledge that I do. I can tell people about them, but it was even better to see it with someone who had gone through those experiences with me. What made it an even more joy-filled thing for me is that she was probably the teammate I clashed with the most when we were on team. If you had told me at the end of our year that she and I would stay in touch, that I would be so happy to see her again, that in the times I did see her our time would be filled with laughter and good conversation, I would not have believed it. It is another testament to the power of God to bring healing and restoration to relationships, and I praise God that that has happened in this case.

The immediate future holds more traditions and reunions – tomorrow, of course, will be parades and bowl games; thank goodness for days off on New Year's Day. We then go to Blissfield and the home of one of last year's team members, then off to Ohio where we will be housed and possibly do a service with Watermark Denmark at the church Kat grew up in, which is in an area only about an hour from where I served as a youth director before starting on team. Then, of course, we are in the home stretch toward heading overseas, where I will be reunited with our prep church in New York and eventually many wonderful people in Germany as well as meeting more wonderful people in the Czech Republic and Romania. It seems that in these times the future is colliding with the past, or more aptly that the future and the past are flowing together in a way that only God can orchestrate. The past keeps coming up and the "routine" of team continues, but we are at that unique moment in time when all of 2003 is only a memory and all of 2004 is laid out, full of promise, before us. Only God knows what it holds, but as old and new things appear and interplay, making even the old things new, I can't wait to experience what will surely be a Happy New Year. – Isaiah 42:9

Date: 1/8/2004

Submitted by: Dave Houghlum

Journal Entry:

So there we were, leaving Riverview Church in Novelty, Ohio on our way to the lavish city of Baltimore. We packed up all our stuff into our trailer, revved up the engine, and hit the road. Now, in that sequence of packing up the trailer, revving the engine, and hitting the road, we forgot one important step when traveling on the road...which will become clear in a moment. As we were driving, Cathleen, looked back in her side mirror of Big Red, and noticed that something was flapping in the wind behind our trailer. What could it be, what could it be? Was it Pat's dirty socks? No! Sune's American flag



Dave Houghlum

bandanna? No! My superman cape that I sleep in? No! It was our trailer doors. That's right. Our trailer doors, flapping in the wind, like a fish flapping for oxygen on an arid beach. In a moment of sheer controlled panic, Cathleen exclaimed loudly, "Um...guys, I think the trailer is open." Of course, we know that she was right. Why you ask? Well, after doing a u-turn (which are easily done on highways with huge 15 passenger vans and a trailer....who we consequently call "Mr. T") we drove back, scouring the highway like super-sleuths, looking for lost items. The first item we saw was Kat's suitcase...sitting like a Spanish galleon ship in the doldrums, in the middle of the freeway. Steve, being the superhero that he is, did his best Frogger (video game from the 1980's) impersonation and successfully retrieved the suitcase in distress. Oddly enough, the first thing we saw, was unfortunately the last thing to fall out. So our quest continued for the missing items. Where's Sherlock Holmes when we need him? So we kept driving, with our faces firmly pressed against the windows of the van as we looked for the elusive belongings, like a husky kid peering through the windows of a candy store. We finally made our way back to where we began, Riverview Church, and low and behold, there was our team's laptop computer just hanging out in the parking lot!!! It looked so lonely and afraid that I had to hold it in my arms and give it a huge smooch, saying, "It's ok baby, we'll never leave you behind again." It was kind of like the end scene in the movie Home Alone when the family is reunited with Kevin. The moment had come to look into Mr. T (the trailer) and see what was gone. I was nervous, pulse racing, palms sweaty...almost like a junior high kid in love. My bag with my clothes was missing as well as Sune's expensive multi-track recorder. So, after a brief team meeting, we decided not to put the picture of my bag and Sune's recorder on the back of a milk carton and to instead call the police station. As we were about to do that, we received a mysterious phone call from Maria at Youth Encounter. She told us that my grandpa had received a call from the police in Novelty and that my grandpa then called Youth Encounter who called us. Did you get all that? Although my bag was not labeled, apparently I left my grandpa's phone number in the bag and the police found it. We made our way to the police station and found not only did they have my bag, but also Sune's recorder and Pat's roller blades. You never know what you're gonna get on any given day on team, or life for that matter, which brings up the next dramatic episode in my life I like to call, "Me and Lebron."

So there I was in Maryland of all places at the Pat Torbit's house, when the suggestion was made to get my finger checked out. Finally, after days of deliberation...I took my chubby, sausage-like finger into primary first clinic to get the official analysis. You see, I had injured it while playing Lebron James (the NBA superstar who's right out of high school) in a one on one street balling game near Cleveland when I rejected his shot attempt into the 3rd row of the stands. Ok, that didn't really happen, but wouldn't it be cool if it did? Picture it now, me waving my index finger in the air just like Dikembe Mutumbo, saying, "Not in my house." What really happened was that we were playing a pick-up game of basketball, and I passed the ball with all the style and flair of a Caucasian who is 6'3" from Soldotna, Alaska. When I did that, someone had lightning quick reflexes (because you would have to if you're playing me...riiiiiight!) and hit the ball right back into my right pointer finger. Anyhow, back to the analysis. Anticipation building. Ok, enough! I broke my pointer finger. That's a great thing for a piano player to do. Well, the good news is that I can still play piano without my pointer finger (although it takes a little creativity to do everything with my pointer finger with other fingers) and I can still play guitar by holding my pick differently. There's this big piece of metal on my finger that keeps it straight...aka a splint. Well, the good news is that I won't have any trouble proclaiming that I'm #1. But what about the metal detectors at the airport? Everyone thinks it's hilarious to now make pirate noises at me such as "AAAAAR," apparently because my metal finger is captain hook esque. And when I grip a fork or spoon at meals, it always looks like I am pointing at someone around the table. People are constantly exclaiming, "What are you pointing at Dave." Clever.

It's also weird to think that I'm in Maryland. I've never been on the East Coast before. I'm so curious about it....like when you flush the toilet, does the water go the other way? And this whole east coast west coast rivalry thing...I'm way west coast being from Alaska. Does that mean we should bullet-proof Big Red? Or I should stop flashing my west coast hand signals. Find out what happens on this strange journey next as we travel to New York.... I'm actually getting all of the songs about New York ready like "New York New York," and "No Sleep till Brooklyn" so we can play them on repeat while in the state. Welp, see ya later.

Peace and love from above,
Dave

Date: 1/12/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

The last place we'll see before leaving the U.S. – where else could we be but New York? To be fair, we've had a great week before this. It began in the eastern Cleveland suburbs in Ohio at the church Kat grew up in. We had a great time Saturday night and Sunday morning with the members of the "other" Watermark (just kidding, guys), making their way to Denmark in two short days. They left on Sunday and we stayed until Tuesday; on our day off I had the chance to spend time with some friends I had not seen since leaving the church I worked at before starting on team. (Also saw "Return of the King" for the second time – highly recommended, one of the best movies I've seen in quite a while, etc.) Leaving Ohio, we crossed the scenic foothills of the Pennsylvania Appalachians and continued on through Maryland until our arrival in the Baltimore suburb of Perry Hall, home of the Torbits, a loving, generous, enthusiastic "Youth Encounter family" in every sense of the term. Our four days in the Baltimore area brought us four programs, a dream come true after our fall schedule. In addition to programs at Pat's church and the church of one of his teammates from last year, we had two school chapels. At the first (at which Pat's sister is currently a student) we worked with the school's praise band, helping them put a song together; at the second (at which Pat was once a student) a high school chapel turned into an all-school chapel with a sound system that didn't work until 15 minutes before we started, 500 students and our craziest interactive Bible story yet. We had Friday night off, so the guys took the opportunity to crash the second Baltimore Quake and see Captive Free Northeast, musical guest Cathy Pino and a host of alumni who were on hand to contribute music, run sound, chaperone youth groups and help in other ways. In my third year on team this is the first Quake or Congress I have ever attended even in part, and I loved it. If I have anything to say about it, you'll definitely see me volunteering at some events once I'm off the road.

Having been through western and southern PA earlier in the week, we cut up the eastern side Saturday on our way to Camp Koinonia, just over the border in New York state, to be with some people from our prep church at a family camp. Our prep church is Bethlehem Lutheran in Baldwin, NY (on Long Island), which is significant for me because that was also my prep church two years ago. At the camp I saw the pastor and her daughter, who joined their family while we were overseas. We saw her when we returned, and it was incredible to see the change in the intervening year and a half. It made me think of my nephew, who is now about five months old; I last saw him at Christmas and it will probably be at least August before the next time, when he will look quite different than he does now. Anyway, being at the camp heightened my anticipation to get to the church, and I made sure I was behind the wheel for yesterday's drive so I could take it all in. A day of variety – the drive started along winding mountain roads dividing Pennsylvania and New York, which was quite different than when we hit the northern suburbs and then New York City itself, taking the expressway straight into the Bronx, over the Whitestone Bridge with a gorgeous view of Manhattan and in the late-afternoon sun and through Queens on our way to Long Island. Call me crazy, but I love driving in mountains and cities, and I got to do both in one day. After dropping the trailer at the church (so we could take the parkway) we were off to dinner, which was also the moment I had been waiting for and talking my teammates' ears off about – my reunion with the Fyfes. This is the family that I stayed with during our three visits (for a total of about two weeks) to Baldwin in my first year on team and hoped I would see again someday. I'm not sure what it is, but when you're with the Fyfes you almost instantly feel like family. They are loving, fun, generous, comfortable, and basically everything that you hope a host family would be. It was great to see them have the same effect on this team, and it's great to know that I (and the other guys) will be with them for eight days.

Today (about time I got to today, huh?) was our last day off in the United States until May, and we spent it in fine style. Most of us took the Long Island Railroad into Manhattan, getting off at Penn Station and walking to Times Square, where we had lunch (at McDonald's, but still in Times Square). After lunch, one of my New York goals came true – I had wanted to go to a filming of "Dayside," the live studio-audience show on the Fox News Channel, but had given up on it since I doubted anyone else would want to go. As we were leaving McDonald's, some people on the street were passing out flyers advertising that day's show. Our walk took us by the FNC studio, so I decided to mention it. I have no idea how or why, but by some miracle everyone decided to give it a shot. My grand total of

on-air time was about a second at the end, but I can now say that I have been on Fox News. The segments I had questions for were the ones they didn't take them on and I think I was the only one of us who enjoyed myself and/or followed everything that was going on, but I loved it and I thank my team again for indulging me.

The rest of the day was a whirlwind of sightseeing – Rockefeller Center, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Tiffany's, Central Park, the Hard Rock Cafe, the Empire State Building (which was also a goal of mine since this was my third visit to NYC and I hadn't been to the top yet, and it was well worth it despite the fact that it looked like it was snowing up), and suddenly it was supper time. After walking around Midtown we had planned to take the subway to Lower Manhattan, but the station was blocked off since we were by Madison Square Garden about 15 minutes before the Knicks game started, so off we went. Down Seventh Avenue, over to Guitar Center, down Fifth Avenue, through Greenwich Village, Soho and Tribeca into the Financial District, and after a much longer than anticipated walk we finally got to St. Paul's Cathedral, turned down Church Street and arrived at Ground Zero, the former site of the World Trade Center towers. I had been there less than two months after the Sept. 11 attacks, and it obviously looked quite different more than two years later but was moving all the same. In this wide open space the size of a city block where the tallest buildings in the U.S. once stood, the famous beam from the towers in the shape of a cross proclaims that God is our "refuge in the day of disaster." (Jeremiah 17:17) We opted to take the subway back to Penn Station to catch the Long Island train, especially after discovering that we had walked nearly 13 miles over the course of the day, just shy of half a marathon – not a bad workout for a day off.

No more days off in the U.S., though – prep days are upon us. This is the time when international teams do their final preparations for leaving the U.S. and beginning their overseas tour – rehearsals, one-on-ones, errands, storing the van & trailer, a lot of packing and more. Fortunately, we get a longer than average amount of time – teams arrive at their prep churches on the 10th (which we technically did since the camp was booked through Bethlehem), and while the other international teams depart between the 13th and 15th we do not leave until the 19th. We have time to do what we need to do, but the days will still be full. It's an exciting time, but also one when we will do a lot of praying that when the time comes we will indeed be ready. We are starting to get some details about our time in the Czech Republic, the first two weeks of our international tour – ministry mostly in one region but to a wide variety of ages and people. Knowing more about the tour is making us look forward to it all the more, so it's probably a good thing that most of our time now (except for a lock-in and Sunday worship this coming weekend) will be focused on preparing for it. This entry is already far too long, so more of the "we're leaving soon" thoughts will come in the next journal. Stay tuned... – Proverbs 19:21

Date: 1/15/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Patience is not a quality that I have in abundance; especially patience for the unknown. During these past few weeks I have been reading a book by Michelle McKinney Hammond. As I was reading Chapter 6 entitled, THE AWAKENING, it was as if I was aroused from a twenty-six year trance. There in front of me in little black print where the words I have lived by for as long as I could remember. "It has been said that the greatest fear is the fear of the unknown". I can not even begin to count the number of times I have said, "If I only knew what God's will was for my life I know I would be able to except that not all of my desires would be fulfilled." What an exclusive and limiting statement of the power of Our Lord and Savior.

Psalm 27:14

"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait on the Lord"

There is a song by the group Enter the Worship Circle entitled Wait on the Lord. It is taken directly from Psalm 27:14. From the moment I heard this song I just knew that it had been written for me.



Martha Mitkos

Some of the lyrics are as follows: "Wait on the Lord, oh my soul. Be strong and take heart, be strong and wait upon the Lord. He is beautiful and good. He's the lover of all men. He has rescued us before. He will rescue us again. He is faithful and true. He is living and just. Surely He will deliver us. (and my favorite part) When you come to me, I will surely open up my arms." To have the knowledge that God is waiting to greet us with open arms and quiet our hearts and remove all fears and doubts.

This past week we have been preparing for our overseas tour. We will fly out of New York on January 19th for Prague, Czech Republic. While this is a time of excitement and anticipation it has also been a time of anxiety and apprehension. God is definitely teaching me patience, especially for the unknown. Not knowing the language...Not knowing our schedule...Not knowing the currency or the exchange rates...Not knowing the culture, etc. I pray that God will quiet my heart, teach me patience, and provide me with the knowledge and assurance that He has always provided and will continue to provide for me.

As Cathleen, Kat, and I listened to this CD we talked about the implications of this song and its meaning on our lives. We have chosen as a team to sing Wait on the Lord in our concerts overseas. It will be our first fully acoustic song. I can't even begin to express to you the joy that Kat and I will feel as we share this song and its meaning for our lives with the people that we will meet.

Psalm 40:1

"I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry."

In His Service,
Martha Mitkos
WMGCR2 03.04

Date: 1/18/2004

Submitted by: Pat Torbit

Journal Entry:

Sunday January 18th. Long Island, New York. One day before we depart the United States for the Czech Republic.

The day starts at about 10:30 in which we join in worship with our amazing host church in Baldwin, New York. After worship we had a short coffee social and then we decided to go to Panera Bread for lunch with my Dad (Steve) Mom (Karen) and Sissy (Allison) who drove up from the charm city of Maryland to see us for the weekend. 10 sandwich's, 10 drinks and a couple bowls of soup later we decided to roll out. From Panera we went to Target to pick up some converters for electricity and some other items. 10 minutes...30 minutes... 2 hours later we finished up at Target. We had about an hour, so we decided to go back to our host homes and the hotel where my parents were staying and just relax. We then went to the guys' host home. (the Fyfes!) Amazing people – if you guys read this – thank you so much for everything again! We ate Pizza there, watched Football and My Big Fat Greek Wedding. After some time with the Fyfes we decided it was getting late so we decided to go. We then made our way to the church. I had to get a couple of my bags and drums. There was only one problem. The church has an alarm that goes off at 11:00. It's 10:45. So my dad and I scramble to get all of my gear out of the church. We do and close the door, it's 10:58. So we then head back to the hotel and start the packing process. The hours are quickly fading. After packing and talking to my beautiful, lovely, amazing lady, Alli, from Minot, North Dakota, I look at the clock and it's 6:30. I'm already cutting into Monday so here's where I stop. Thanks to all for everything, I will miss everyone. 'Til next time guten nacht. Talk to you all on Sundays.

God Bless, and much love,
Pat



Pat Torbit

Date: 1/19/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Well, this is it. This is what we have all been waiting for. The countdown of months became weeks, weeks became days, days became hours and now the countdown is no more. After all of the anticipation, the first step has been taken and our overseas tour is underway. Our time of preparation completed, we now truly start our time as an international team.

It's been an interesting journey to get to this point, to be sure. Our prep days were fuller than our fall ever was – with plenty of time for rehearsal, we have added three songs (and started a fourth) and a skit to our arsenal. We took time to connect with each other as a team and individually, to run all the necessary last-minute errands, to make attempts to learn a little more Czech and German (Romanian comes later), and even to take a team outing to the Cheesecake Factory complete with more than two hours' waiting time to get in. That last one came between our only two pieces of programming for the week – from Friday evening through Saturday afternoon we helped with Bethlehem's Famine event. The students participating went without food for 24 hours, essentially two meals as it started after supper. Some of us (myself included) took part in the fasting even though it was not required of us; that experience and the Bible study we led Saturday morning helped us reflect on the fact that our physical hunger in times of fasting reminds us not only of the hungry around the world but also of our spiritual hunger for Christ. If only we could always feel that spiritual hunger as acutely as we did our physical hunger toward the end of those 24 hours...

Then, on Sunday morning we contributed a few songs and a children's message for the worship service, and I gave the first full-blown sermon I've given in a while, which went pretty well for having been written the day before. Sunday night (last night) was, in addition to the frenzied last-minute packing that would come later, a time of celebration as we all gathered at the Fyfe home along with the Torbits, who had made the journey from Baltimore to see the service. I thoroughly enjoyed our prep days, and a large part of that is due to the church we were at and the people who comprise it. This was a very special place for me two years ago and I was thrilled to watch it become special for this team as well. To the Fyfes, Pastor Kim & John, Pat, Mike, everyone who brought lunches and everyone at Bethlehem in Baldwin, NY – words cannot express our gratitude for all you have done for us. We are glad that the first familiar faces many of us will see upon our return to the U.S. will be yours. Thank you for being living examples of God's love and servanthood; may God bless you as you have blessed us.

And now, the day is here. We did a few laps around the church fellowship hall to make sure we could carry everything, saw to some final details, did our last packing and storage of things we're not taking with us, and then it was off to the airport – specifically JFK in New York. After all this time and work, we almost didn't make it out of the country. Seems the good people at British Airways saw our departure and return dates, saw that they were separated by more than 90 days, saw our lack of visas (which we had previously been assured we wouldn't need) and concluded that we shouldn't go lest we (and therefore the airline) get into trouble with the Czech immigration authorities. We, of course, knew that we would not be in the Czech Republic for that entire time (only two weeks, in fact), and we eventually got that through to the supervisor. Nearly one hour and an embassy call later (whether it was the U.S.'s Czech embassy or the Czech Republic's U.S. embassy I'm not sure) our friends behind the desk finally relented. After receiving repeated instructions to get passport stamps and document all of our travels between countries (which we were of course planning to do anyway) we were, as FFH says, "ready to fly."

It's about a seven-hour flight to London, but with the time change we left New York at about 7 p.m. and would arrive in London close to 6:30 a.m., so after supper was served most of us resisted the temptation to watch movies and tried to get some sleep. I think I did the best job at it, but sleep on an airplane is rarely good or plentiful. Hopefully that, coupled with the fact that few of us got much if any sleep last night either, means that we will be able to get some good sleep on our first night in Europe and thus avoid the worst of the jet lag – assuming we can keep ourselves awake until at least close to a normal bedtime. We arrive in Praha (the Czech name for Prague) at about 11 a.m. local time Tuesday, where we will be met by our contact Daniel and taken to the place where we will spend the night before making the five-hour drive from Prague (in the northwest part of the Czech Republic) to the Silesia region in the very easternmost part of the country, where we will spend the next two weeks. Hopefully we will have some opportunity to see Prague – I was there for part of a



Steve Ellwein

day two years ago on a day off near the German-Czech border and loved it. It is widely recognized as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe (especially the Old City), and I was thrilled to have the chance to come back.

We are all having different reactions to going overseas, ranging from excited to nervous to the full reality of it not having hit us yet. (And then there's the rest of my team.) Based on the last two times I've done this, sometime around the moment of the plane pulling up to the gate at our final destination is probably about when it will hit me that we're doing this, that our overseas tour is starting. Very soon, it will – our time of adjustment and orientation will be over and we will be in the thick of the ministry we were called here to do. We're on the edge of a new phase of our team life, and I'm wondering if we are perhaps on the edge of something new as a team as well. Everyone's reaction to being overseas is going to be different – not only in terms of culture shock, but also in the sheer variety and amount of what we will be doing – and those different reactions could change our team dynamic. In addition to that, God continues to move in each of us and will reveal Himself to us in ways that none of us (not even me in all my "veteranness") have experienced before, which will be a thrill to notice in myself and a joy to observe in my teammates. It's like the first day at a new level of school (high school, college, etc.) – you're a little nervous and not quite sure what to expect, and you know that there will be some hard times ahead, but you know that it's going to be great. In different ways and through different situations in all of us, God has prepared us for and pulled us inexorably to this moment. We can now turn away from that, or we can follow the call He has placed in each of us and go forward. It may sometimes be tough, but we are not alone – we have the prayers and support of friends, family and the congregations we visited in the fall, we have each other (which becomes even more important now than it was), and of course we will rely on God. With God's strength, patience, endurance, peace, and all the other wonderful gifts which He alone can give, we will go forward, and it will be great. This is it. This is what we have all been waiting for. – Mark 16:15, Joshua 1:9

Date: 1/21/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

Dobry den! Hey there beloved friends and family!

It's so exciting to be able to write to you from the Czech Republic, we don't have a phone or email here, so this will be getting to the US to you by the good ol' postal service! We miss you all and miss being home, but the excitement and surprises each day brings are more than enough to keep us going as here! God is good!



Cathleen Gosselin

Today was our first full day in the Czech Republic (let's just call it CR, because it's hard to type!). This morning we woke up in Prague had breakfast with our contact Daniel before we went to visit the US Embassy. Breakfast was awesome! For those of you who haven't experienced Nutella, it's a chocolate spread that Europeans eat on freshly baked bread for breakfast!!! Mhhh mhhh good! We started off with a walk to the subway station and used our 24-hour passes to ride to downtown Prague. It was a spectacular sight to come up the 3-story escalator from the subway and walk into the heart of Prague in the light of day! The buildings are old and huge and magnificent. The people wear lots of fur coats and hats, there's a foot of light fluffy snow covering everything, the cars are small and lots of fun colors and the streets are windy and made out of cobblestone. It's hard to summarize the whole day, so I'll give you some highlights. First of all let me tell you our purpose: we just needed to go to the US Embassy to register (how does a Dane do that at the US Embassy you ask, yah, we forgot about that until later...just wait, there's a funny story with that too!). And after that we had some time to look around Prague and then at 1pm our ride would pick us up to take us to Silesia, the region where we will spend the rest of our time in CR.

The wonderful thing about being overseas is that we rarely ever know what's going on, which is fun because we just get to enjoy the crazy situations that we encounter, and learn to trust our contact and work with them (by the way our contacts have been awesome and they are taking really good care of us!). First of all we get to the US Embassy and we are instructed in a thick accent to "Wait outside!", so we queue up alongside the Embassy and watch the Policie patrol the area around us. Then they take us in by 3's and run us through metal detectors, it's always interesting with Dave

because he has a metal splint on his finger, so he always gets searched forever! When we get upstairs we see a bunch of lines so we just stand in one (again, we didn't really know what was going on, and at this point neither did Daniel). Finally we just found out we had to fill out a little card with our passport # saying where we were staying in case they needed to evacuate Americans. That was easy for 6 of us, except that Sune isn't American...so our search begins for the Danish Embassy. On our way to find the Danish Embassy, we went by the Irish Embassy and met the Irish Ambassador to the CR (very important, I guess) and he said that "If you need any help, just go upstairs and tell Meesha that The Ambassador sent you!"...our first encounter with a dignitary I guess!

We passed the Japanese Embassy and the Luxemburg Embassy (apparently they're all grouped together) and finally found the Danish Embassy. Daniel went up to the counter first and spoke Czech with the woman there, then he backed up and the woman greeted Sune in Danish, but unfortunately Sune has forgotten most of his Danish and he screamed "What!?!?"...oh, this is only the beginning. He started out fine speaking in Danish, but after a while he stopped and switched to English, we just laughed because our Dane has started to become an American!! I don't think the lady at the Embassy believed he was Danish, so we just left and toured around Prague! J

At 1pm we met Rudolf our driver, well by "met", I mean we were all able to say "hello" and "thank you" in Czech! We don't speak Czech and he didn't speak English, German, Danish, or Spanish so none of us could really communicate with him, but we had a good time anyways and Daniel was still with us so all was well. He drove a 9-passenger van thing with a little trailer for our luggage. We drove 5 hours to a small village called Smilovice on the very eastern side of CR only miles away from the Polish and Slovakian borders. It's an awesome region with people of Czech, Slovakian, and Polish decent. Though we wouldn't know it from our poor Czech, they speak a dialect here that incorporates those 3 languages plus German. We're staying in a new building called Karmel, which we think is a Christian retreat center (again, though we ask a lot of questions, we don't really know!). It has bedrooms upstairs and large meeting rooms and a chapel downstairs. It's a really nice and quite new facility. There's a couple who lives in an apartment downstairs who take care of it and cook, they are awesome and they speak a little German, so when our contacts are gone for the evening, we try to communicate with them with a nice combination for German and Czech...it's great!!! They serve us all of our meals downstairs and it already feels like home!

Well that's a lot for the first day! We are doing well and adjusting well to the culture, the food, the time difference, and everything! God's good! Until next Wednesday!

Peace and love from our Father, Cathleen

Date: 1/22/2004

Submitted by: Dave Houghlum

Journal Entry:

Yo yo yo (which actually means "yeah yeah yeah" in Czech), I bring you greetings from Europe....yeah that's way eastside! That's right baby, we made it to the Czech Republic! I hope that other people explained thoroughly where our adventures have taken us the last few days because I'll just talk about recent events. Well, today started off early, somewhere between 2am, then 4am, then about 7:15am. My body is still on New York time which makes life pretty interesting lately. So, after a light breakfast of bread with the so so good chocolate/nut spread called nutella...mmmmm....sorry, got drool on the computer, we drove off in a mini version of Big Red, which we call Mini-Red. Definitely has all the mystique of Big Red, but lacks the unreliability that Big Red unfortunately gave us. After a 2 hour drive in the region of the Czech Republic called Silesia, we arrived at our destination city called Krnov. You see, today, we had the opportunity to give a program to a large group of people with physical and mental disabilities, so we first started out by receiving a tour from the directors there. It was a very nice facility and the tour was translated from Czech to English by our amazing contact named Ingrid. They offered many different programs to help people with disabilities such as water therapy, physical therapy, carpentry, ceramics, and other art projects. One interesting and unfamiliar portion of the tour was a particular room. I will describe it and see if you can guess what it is. There is a very large water bed with huge draped curtains, a red tintish glow emanating from



Dave Houghlum

the red light on the ceiling, with a big stereo on the wall playing light music, two heart shaped pillows on the bed, and a disco ball above it, it was interestingly enough a room to simulate what it's like in the womb to help premature babies develop.

So on to the program. The program was actually quite fun to do for many reasons. The first is that we decided to introduce ourselves in the Czech language. Now, that may seem fine, unless you're learning how to speak Czech right before you have to do it!!!! (For those of you who do not know what Czech sounds like, it is a Slavic language so it sounds a lot like Russian.) So we all introduced ourselves the best we could. I knew I should have majored in Czech in college. It was hilarious when our interpreter Ingrid translated Steve's Czech into Czech. Yup, that's how bad it was...or good it was? Riiiiight. Did you know Alaska in Czech is Alyeshka? Well, now you know.

During the program, the people there were very responsive. Many clients there brought their own drums and were playing along with us during the program, which made it interesting to find a beat, but I'm very happy that they played along. We have a part in one of our songs where Pat, our drummer, yells, "Here we go!" but this time he decided to yell that in Czech which sounded like "de jembe"....which ironically enough is the instrument he was playing – the djembe. The crowd laughed.

After the program we received a guided tour of the city by a local woman named Veronica who helps out with the facility. The one problem is that (I'm afraid to say this) is that it was cold! Yeah, I know, I'm from Alaska and I should be used to the cold (I had to throw that in), but Eastern Europe is quite cold and snowy too! So we got to see a big town square with basically every building there being a different color...which is why I have officially renamed the square "Skittle Square" (you know, after the candy skittles...taste the rainbow!). We saw a store that was operated by people of the facility where they sell things that the clients have made to help support them. The store was called Ninive...and no, Jonah was not there so don't ask. After that we made it to a coffee shop that was recently renovated too by the people there, where we watched many slides of the different outreach programs that are offered and had some good coffee and biscuits.

And ending up the night, we did it in a way only we could know how, by having a team meeting next to a group of gentlemen that were in a brass ensemble that we practicing polka music in the room next door. All we could do was laugh as we had lovely background music as we described our high points and our low points of our day.

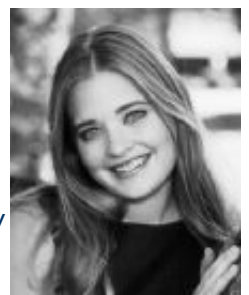
And now for the serious reflection part. I am very privileged to be here sharing the love of Jesus Christ with the people right now in the Czech Republic. They have been under such oppression from the Communist party for such a long time (I got to hear an account first hand of what it was like, but that's another story), that to be sharing the gospel in a country that is approximately 70% atheist is quite an opportunity. The Christians that I have met here are very passionate about their faith, maybe because they have had to fight for it so hard to keep their faith alive in the face of extreme opposition. I guess when you have to fight for something, it means so much more. It is an inspiration and blessing to me to be sharing stories with the people of this nation and to be learning a great deal of what real perseverance looks like. Well, until next time, keep living, loving, learning, and always living passion.

Peace and love from above,
Dave

Date: 1/23/2004
Submitted by: Kat Goglin
Journal Entry:

Friday, January 23

Ahoj! everyone from the Czech Republic. Today has been a great day! We began the day by going to school classrooms and doing small programs in Trinec and Oldrichovice. I think this has been my favorite part of team so far. In spite of the language barrier, I loved interacting with the kids. At one of the schools, the pastor in the community told



Kat Goglin

us that he really liked what we were doing. He said that the kids usually see Christianity in a more traditional sense, and it was good for them to see Christians more free and fun. That was just so awesome to hear!

I also did not have my 5-string dilemma this morning, so that was helpful. I am referring to my new bass guitar. Oh, how I miss my "blue fury"! After playing bass for 4 months I have graduated to the 5 string bass, a step I am really not ready to take. Steve is confident that I will get it, but I am not so sure. I am praying that in Germany I will have a 4- string so I don't have to re-learn everything. Until then, I will take up the challenge and do the best I can.

This evening we went to Frydek-Mistek for a teenage youth group meeting, it was really neat singing worship songs with them. We were singing in English and they were singing in Czech, it sounded cool! We have found that "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High" and "Give Thanks" are great songs that we all know. After that many of the youth there joined us as we walked across town. (A huge thanks to Sune and Pat who carried our heavy amp on the long, cold, snowy walk) We went to an orphanage where we had a short program and then the kids sang some songs for us! It was great!!! I am really looking forward to going to more schools next week! Well, I will talk to you next Friday!!! Kat

Date: 1/24/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

I once saw a sign that read, "God will not give me anything today that with his help I can not handle...I just wish he didn't trust me so much." Today, these were my sentiments exactly.

Our morning began with a nice, leisurely breakfast at Karmel (A Christian Retreat Center in Smilovice, Czech Republic). At 8:00AM our contact Daniel, arrived at Karmel ready and rearing to go. Today we would travel to the mountains and spend time in fellowship with the youth from the church in Tanovice. I was so excited. I love the mountains and the outdoors and what a great opportunity to have some fun and get to know the youth of the Czech Republic. Daniel had informed us the day before that we would need warm clothing and boots for our journey. Our first stop was at Tesco (kind of like a Wal-mart) where I purchased a pair of hiking boots for 1,899 Koruna. As I waited in the parking lot for the rest of my team I began to apply all of my layers. First, 3 shirts, then a fleece hoodie, next 2 pair of pants and 2 pair of socks, Boots, A hat, and finally, Gloves. Surely this would be enough to keep me warm. We drove to the base of the mountain where our driver dropped us off. Daniel said that it was about a twenty minute hike to the cabin in the mountains.

As we begin hiking up what appeared to be a road, we noticed the trail getting narrower and narrower and the snow getting deeper and deeper. The trees were absolutely beautiful with the heavy snow weighing down their enormous branches. As far as the eye could see there were trees covered with snow. We passed over a river flowing ever so slowly through the rocks below, with snow glistening off its banks. It was the most beautiful and pristine scene you could ever imagine. Now, before I talk about our journey up the mountain I want you to understand that while our experience was absolutely unbelievable and I wouldn't have traded it for the world, it was definitely the most difficult day of my life physically.

About ten minutes into our hike we met up with some the youth (by youth I mean 18-30 year-old young adults) that were heading up the mountain. After greeting one another we began to make our way up the mountain. Now, I don't know exactly how I can explain this to you so that you can get the full effect. We hiked and hiked and hiked some more; straight up the mountain, in thigh high snow with only about a foot wide path that made the snow about knee to shin deep. The snow was fresh and soft, awesome for tackling your teammates (Thanks Pat and Sune, I still think I have snow in my collar) and great for down hill skiing, but not great to catching your footing as you climb a mountain 3 miles straight up. Oh, did I mention that the Czech's were running laps around us as



Martha Mitkos

we climbed. They are in incredible shape. The higher we climbed, the thinner the air got and the harder it was to climb. With every step I slipped back a little farther. I was really only taking baby steps. While we were hiking I began talking with some of the youth so all of my teammates made there way ahead of me. I just didn't know how far. About 30 minutes into the hike I asked Daniel if there would be water when we got to the cabin, he responded with a cheerful voice, "There will be hot tea." Now, I can't even begin to tell you how badly I just wanted to sit and drink about a gallon of water. Tea was the last thing on my mind. Finally, after what seemed like hours we arrived at the top of the mountain. I was completely exhausted to the point of tears. I was holding them back and sucking down sprays from my inhaler. Immediately I was greeted by some wonderful youth. As far as the eye could see there where members of the youth group playing in the snow. But where were my teammates? I asked one of the young men "Where are the Americans?" and his response, "Inside." As I walked into this small cabin on the mountain I found all six of my teammates huddled in the corner at a table drinking hot tea...Alone. So, here is watermark, exhausted, sore, just wanting to sleep and where were the youth? Playing games in the snow. One thing about the Czech youth, they love to play in the snow. J Kat and I made eye contact and I almost lost it. She could see the tears welling up in my eyes from sheer exhaustion. Eventually our adrenaline balanced out and we were about to gain our composure and just in time. The youth began pilling into this small room. Ten...Twenty...Thirty...Forty youth. By this time I had stopped counting because you couldn't see everyone and there was standing room only and we were the main attraction at this circus. We played games, ate lunch, sang praise and worship music in both Czech and English, and of course... played in the snow. But not only did they want to play in the snow, they wanted to play blob tag in the thigh high snow on the top of the mountain. Today was definitely a unification of the global church. We had an amazing time, but boy were we happy to lay our heads down by the end of the day. Around 4PM the sky began to get dark and it was time for us to leave. Except in the dark all of the snow looks the same and you can't really find the path. So we ran down the mountain that took us over an hour to climb up. Sometimes we were moving so fast that we almost created a domino effect with each other. Finally we arrived at the van with the snow glistening off of the tree from the reflection of an almost full moon. What an awesome ending to a very long day filled with memories that will last a lifetime.

Even though sometimes our lives are filled with mountains that seem impossible to climb and our bodies are weak with pain and hunger God's strength is enough to help us overcome any obstacle whether great or small. In Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." See also, 2 Corinthians 12:9

In His Service,
Martha Mitkos
WMGCR2

Date: 1/27/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:

It was another full day in the Czech Republic for Watermark, made even more interesting by the fact that Sune is a little under the weather and was thus unable to join us today, hence this special Tuesday report from yours truly. When I say "another," that's aside from yesterday – we had a day off and no transportation, so we spent the day here at Karmel, the retreat center/church meeting space/multi-purpose building in the tiny (as in a few minutes to walk from end to end) but charming town of Smilovice that is our home for these two weeks in the Czech Republic. In the last few days we have been busier, visiting with the youth group in Fr_dek-Místek, one of the larger cities in the region, joining them in a program at a local orphanage, and walking nearly an hour up (and down) a mountain to spend some time in a cottage near _eladná (Celadna if you can't read the last word; this American keyboard on our laptop doesn't have all the Czech characters without going to a special function) close to the Slovakian border with another youth group, which you've probably read about in previous journals. Last Sunday was a lot of joy and a little frustration for me. We had two main programs – Nebory, where we helped with worship, Sunday school and spent some time with the youth group (whenever you see "youth group" in reference to the Czech Republic, count



Steve Ellwein

on an age range of about 16-30), and Ligotka, where we were part of an all-ages meeting (two messages, children's choir, etc.) and again were with their youth for a while. The joy is that both programs were great; the frustration is that the first parts of both events were the first times we used our Czech "sound system." Using the quote marks is kind of a joke – it's not bad, we make it work, and we are grateful to have it; it's just less than we are used to. A team that found a way to almost use up a 24-channel board now has to compress into 8 channels. No monitors, no speaker stands (fortunately we were able to borrow some yesterday) – on the bright side, our setups are a lot quicker and I can carry the board by myself (in one hand, no less). The one thing I really miss is our equalizer unit – not being able to compensate for the different kinds of rooms we are in sometimes made me think yesterday that we sound better when we are acoustic, which we are doing far more of here. Is that a blasphemous thought for a sound tech? Anyway, we made it through and we still have a few opportunities this week to play with it more.

Today involved a lot of driving, so maybe this would be a good opportunity to explain how that works for us here – namely, that we don't do it. We are told (or it's on our schedule) when we will be leaving for the day, and at that time Ingrid (one of our contacts and our most frequent translator) appears, along with our driver. So far three or four different men have come with nine-passenger vans owned or rented by the Slezská (Silesia, the region we are in and a smaller region within Moravia) diakonie (harder to explain; an attempt is below) to bring us around to the different places we visit during the day. Sometimes they come in for the programs, sometimes they reappear with the van and the end of our time at a place. Most of the time it's an adventure for us because the drivers are more used to the roads, which are often narrow, snow-covered and filled with curves as we are near the mountains, than we Americans with our wide streets, salt and snowplows are. It's a good thing, though – if we were doing the driving, we would probably be taking it so slowly that we would never get where we need to be when we need to be there. Only one has spoken German and none have spoken English, so usually all we can do is smile and say "dobr_ den" (dobry den = good day or a more formal hello) and "d_kuji" (dekuji = thank you) to them. I wish I had learned more Czech before coming here, but so far we have for the most part been able to communicate, even if a lot of it has been through translators, and it reassures us that even though languages sometimes form a barrier and we are not able to communicate to the level we would like to, we still share the same faith in the same God. Anyway, we appreciate our drivers very much and thank them for their service; we would literally be nowhere (or at least stuck at Karmel) without them.

So, lots of driving. Today we visited no less than four diakonical centers. These centers can serve any of a number of functions – some for counseling, some providing living space and jobs for the homeless, and quite a few to care for and/or teach mentally and/or physically handicapped children and adults. The latter (for children) is the function of Eunika, the first of the centers in the Karviná area that we visited. It was our basic children's program – a few program-type songs, most of our sing-a-longs, a question and answer time. I haven't spent a lot of time working with mentally and/or physically handicapped children, so I didn't really know what to expect (save that we would keep things fairly simple) since this is a new ministry area for me. We were well received, though – as is often the case at these types of centers many of the clients had various hand percussion instruments, so we sometimes had a few different beats going, but their enthusiasm was great to see. At the end we were even presented with some small gifts (clay animal figures) made in their art classes. Following a short visit to Eplis (a counseling center for abused women) and lunch, our next program was at the Sara center in nearby Petrovice. This center was a rather mixed audience – seniors, abused women and their children – so we had to make the program about as intergenerational as we could in 30-45 minutes, the typical length of one of our programs these days. There was not much reaction, which was understandable considering everything that they had been through, but hopefully we brought a little bit of happiness and God's love to their days. Back to Karviná and the Pohoda center, where we had what seemed like an after-school program for youth up to age 15. Definitely the most active question and answer session we've had yet and even a little game time too – sorry we didn't come through with a rap, though. All in all, quite a full day.

Every day I get a lot of things to think about, and today two of them stuck out for me. At the end of the day we had our team devotion time, and Kat led one that she put a lot of work into – at least a few hours' searching – taking one passage that struck her and finding other verses talking about topics in the passage. Actually, we only got through half – she got so into the project that we have to make the devotion a two-parter. All the devotion consisted of was Bible verses, which aside from the passage itself was exactly the point. The verse I used in my last journal was Joshua 1:9. Right before that, in Joshua 1:8, God says "do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth;

meditate on it day and night." Now, I try to make time to read my Bible every day, but to what extent do I "meditate on it day and night?" Kat's love for God's Word is obvious (as is that of many of my teammates, but she was the one I particularly noticed it in today); how much do I let that show in myself by not letting it "depart from [my] mouth?" With all the sharing of God's message we do for others it is crucial that we take some of it in ourselves. It is crucial to meditate on it, to live by it, to get so wrapped up in it that it is what others see when they look at or listen to us; I was reminded of that again today. Earlier in the day, at the Eplis center, we got one of the greatest compliments we have received this year. Since it was only a visit we did not bring our instruments, but the women who worked there wanted to hear a song. We are definitely not an a cappella team, but we made our way through "Sanctuary." At the end one of the workers said something that translated to something like "it's nice to hear beautiful music in here; normally in this room we only hear about people's problems." Somehow by God's grace the ministry we do makes a difference, and it's good for us to hear about it sometimes. I think that God was smiling when He heard that comment that was made to us – who am I not to smile along with Him?

– Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Proverbs 12:25

Date: 1/29/2004

Submitted by: Dave Houghlum

Journal Entry:

Today was unlike any day that I have had on team before. We had breakfast around 7am and then left for Poland around 7:30. After about a 2 hour drive, we arrived at a destination, where during its prime, no one would ever dare to visit or buy a postcard from. Today, we visited the infamous Nazi death camp called Auschwitz. Now, for those of you who do not know much about Auschwitz, it was the primary Nazi extermination camp, where the Nazi's murdered over 1,500,000 people between 1940 and 1945. Although many of those murdered were Jews, many others that were not Jews were also murdered.



Dave Houghlum

As we set foot on the grounds of Auschwitz, an eerie fog rolled in on top of the fallen snow, creating an increasing atmosphere of dread. At the front gate of Auschwitz is a sign that read, "Arbeit Macht Frei." This sign told the classic lie that many people who came to Auschwitz believed, that work would make them free. Unfortunately, work only brought death. Barbed wire extended out from the front gate and twisted and turned through out the entire complex. It was a constant reminder that those who entered were not intended to leave. There were many rows of barracks that were rectangular in shape and made of red brick. Each of these barracks, and just about everything else for that matter, was original. The tour guide, which was provided for by our contacts, spoke English, and was very knowledgeable about Auschwitz because she has been working there for the past 25 years. I could not even imagine that. She lead us through the different barracks, each numbered, and containing a different subject matter concerning Auschwitz, such as prisoner's life, extermination, etc. Inside each of these barrack's was a specific exhibit that contained many information plaques, horrific pictures, and other significant artifacts.

Of these exhibitions, many of them moved me to tears, but a few in particular will probably stay etched in my mind for the rest of my life. The first exhibition that made me realize the magnitude and the "Hey Dave, this is real" was a room that contained thousands upon thousands of locks of hair that were cut from women before they entered the gas chambers. I seriously felt ill as I looked intently at the hair that would never be returned to its rightful owner. As we entered one room, there was shoe after shoe after shoe after shoe, literally hundreds of thousands of old worn shoes, piled on top of each other. Each pair of shoes with a story to tell. Each pair of shoes, a life lived, a love never to return, a battle fought, a battle inevitably lost. Each pair, with asking questions, getting no answers. Each pair, surrounded by others, but each pair, so incredibly alone in the pile. Here is a poem I wrote about those shoes:

Shoes

Alone in the pile, I sit here today,
Alone in the pile, and here I will stay
The story I tell, can never be heard,

For death does not speak the kindest of words
My color has faded, surrounded but alone,
There is no one to wear me, so quietly I moan
Alone in the pile I sit here at last,
Alone in the pile, with shades of the past.

We made our way to a significant memorial between barracks 10 and 11. In this court yard, the walls were high and all the windows were boarded up so that none of the other prisoners could see what was occurring down below. It was in this area, called the Death Wall, where thousands of people were shot and killed. Earlier groups of people had left flowers and candles in memory of loved ones lost. From there, we moved inside barrack 11, which was the infamous death barrack. We were lead into a dungeon-like basement where the first experiments were conducted using the poisonous gas. There were also three types of cells used for torturing and killing people. One was by starvation, one was by complete darkness and asphyxiation, and the other was so small that it required its prisoners to stand at all times. One interesting story of hope came from the depths of this dungeon. A Polish Catholic priest named Father Maximilian Kolbe found out that a prisoner had been sentenced to starvation and the priest offered to take his place. The Nazi's agreed and the priest underwent starvation for 14 days before the Nazi's decided to just outright kill him. The prisoner that was intended to go to the starvation cell eventually outlasted Auschwitz and died just 8 years ago at the age of 92. This remarkable story reminds me of how we have all been sentenced to death, but we have been given a new lease on life because Jesus has taken our place in the starvation cell. This priest really knew what it meant to lay down one's life for his brother.

From there, we took a short walk to the final destination for thousands and thousands of people: the gas chambers and crematorium. Jews and non-Jews alike were duped into thinking they were entering into a shower room, when it was nothing more than a façade for a factory of death. Upon entering, the doors were sealed shut, and poisonous cyklon B was dropped through holes in the ceiling, killing up to 700 people in 15 minutes. As I stood there, in the gas chamber, I asked myself, "What were those 15 minutes like?" The shock, the horror, the fear, the screams, moans, shouts for help. But no one would rescue them. It is a feeling like no other to be standing in an area where thousands upon thousands of people have been murdered. Horribly indescribable.

We ended our tour with a tour of the other side of the camp called Birkenau. It was here were people arrived by train and were immediately separated into two groups by one Nazi. As this decider of destiny pointed to the right, the people were lead directly to their fate in the gas chamber, and to the left, they were forced to face the hardships in one of the most brutal camps imaginable. There were numerous guard towers, and miles of barbed wire everywhere, as well as much more wide open spaces and a vastness not felt in the other section of the camp. At the end of the train tracks there was a memorial between two destroyed gas chambers on both sides. The memorial had many flowers in front of it and plaques on the ground in numerous languages. The plaque in English read, "For ever let this place be a cry of despair and a warning to humanity, where the Nazis murdered about one and a half million men, women, and children, mainly Jews, from various countries in Europe."

As we walked through the front gates of the Auschwitz to continue with the rest of our lives, I had a strange feeling overtake me. It was one that reminded me that over 1,500,000 people would have given anything to walk through the very gates that I was walking through, and today, was a day not only to remember death, but also to celebrate life.

It's difficult to describe my feelings about today. I have been to a Nazi concentration camp before called Dachau while touring with my high school symphonic band in 1997 and that experience deeply affected me. This experience at Auschwitz is even more intense because of the magnitude of the horrific events that occurred here. I found myself feeling a vast array of different emotions throughout the day. At first, I felt apprehension and fear, because I wasn't quite sure I wanted to see what was inside the walls of Auschwitz. After seeing many of the pictures of mutilated bodies, starving and abused children, thousands of locks of hair, the shoes, and the gas chambers, I felt both intense disgust to the point where I felt physically ill, as well as intense sadness for the people who endured such torment. I also felt a great amount of anger towards the Nazis, which lasted throughout most of the day. Knowing that just about everything at the camp was original made the whole experience even more real. It left me asking the question: "What would this wall say if it could talk?"

Being faced with the cold realities of pain, suffering, and death, first by visiting ground zero in New York City about 3 weeks ago, and now Auschwitz, has left an indelible mark on my soul. I am often left with many difficult questions that people have been asking for thousands of years such as: "Where was God in all of this?" "Why did this happen?" "Why do bad things happen to good people?" "Why?" I have none of those answers. One thing that I've learned is that asking the proverbial "why" often leaves me frustrated, tired, and often disappointed with both God, and myself. However, the question "what now" is one that I have learned to incorporate into my life that has really helped me through struggles and hardships. I have, and hopefully never will face any of the atrocities that the people under Nazi persecution had to face, but we as people of love, people of hope, people of change, must do precisely those things. We must be catalysts of change, to be that which we want to see in the world (Gandhi), and above all to fight for the dignity, worth, and joy of others who cannot fight for themselves. Finally, during those times when hope flickers like a candle in the wind, to trust that God will see us through even the darkest of nights.

"The one who does not remember history is bound to live through it again."

-George Santayana

Date: 1/30/2004

Submitted by: Kat Goglin

Journal Entry:

It's Friday again! I woke up this morning feeling a bit sick. I think this cold has been trying to bring me down since New York, but I have been fighting it off with all the Vitamin C and Echinacea that I could muster. But the busy schedule, cold weather and amount of time that we spend outside has finally caught up with me. We began today by going to a school in Navsi. I think it was a day off for the kids, because we played sports (well, the other members of my team played) and did a program in the gym. It was a lot of fun, and at the end they kept asking us to do more songs.



Kat Goglin

We then had lunch at a church in the same town. It was there that I was able to check my email for the first time since New York. It has been really hard not being able to communicate with anyone back home. We don't have a phone at Karmel (the "dormitory" we are staying at) so we have to walk up the street and use a payphone outside. (did I mention it's cold?)

Anyway, this evening we went to a snowy mountain log cabin and met with a youth group there. It was here that I gave my first sharing (testimony) overseas. I was really nervous about using a translator. I tend to be a bit scatter-brained at times so I was afraid that I would lose my focus with all the breaks between sentences. But God is good and He helped me through, even though my throat was hurting and I had a fever. The fever may have had more to do with the fact that the room was so hot, but I am sure that God used the sharing. Our translator and contact, Jirka, said it was very good, so I hope that it reached some of the kids. Well, tomorrow some of us are going to a big market in Poland, but I think I am going to stay at Karmel and rest. It is much needed! Oh, and the 5-string bass is getting easier, I think I may get just in time for me to give it back! Well, I will talk to you next week, from Germany! Love, Kat

Date: 1/31/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

I just had the most amazing day with some friends from the church in Tranovice, Czech Republic. Daniel, our main contact here had asked some youth from the church if they would like to take us around and show us the sights.



The youth groups here are much different than what we would typically refer to as a youth group in the states. But maybe the churches in the Czech Republic have it right and we should take note. I have been overwhelmingly impressed by the love and dedication to living a Christ driven life that the youth here in the Czech Republic live. They are just on fire for Jesus! It really gives me a lot of hope for the future of our church youth groups in America. Here in the Czech Republic most "Youth" have finished high school and are either attending college or working (usually 18-30 years old). They have activities throughout the week and month that not only focus on fellowship, but also on prayer, community service and witness, and worshiping God. They love to sing Praise and Worship songs!

Martha Mitkos

We began our day by traveling by bus to Cesky-Tesin with three members of the youth and that is where we met up with my new friend Renata. We were going to get to spend our day off seeing the sights and shopping at the market in Poland. We wandered around the city and then walked across the boarder into Poland. Now Renata was the only one who spoke English fluently in the group so immediately we began talking and asking each other questions. Within a matter of minutes we were chatting like we had always been friends. Renata's boyfriend, Libor is the director of the youth group. Our meeting last Saturday got off to an awkward start with a game of wounded soldier. Did I mention that all of the games the Czech Youth play are making fun of someone? They get such a kick out of it. Anyway, for Cathleen and me, these were our first memories of Libor. After really getting to know him today, we just tease him and tell him that was our first memory of him.

The market was bustling with people. They had everything for sale. When I say everything, I mean everything, even horse meat. YUCK! Anyway, we had an awesome time. Later in the day we were hiking up an old cobblestone hill when I asked if there was a bathroom I could use. Renata took me to a public restroom where you had to pay 10 Polish cents in order to use it (which of course I did not have). So, while Renata paid for me I went to the bathroom (and I use the word bathroom very loosely). She paid a little extra so that I could have some toilet paper. Great huh! I went to wash my hands (without soap) and realized that my jeans were probably cleaner than the old towel that was hanging on the wall. Renata and I left just giggling at how gross it was and she said that they are usually taken better care of when you have to pay.

As we crested the top of the hill we saw a great tower. All that remained of a castle that had once stood tall overlooking the Neighboring Czech and Polish towns. As we approached the booth to purchase our passageway the elderly woman working the booth gave us all gifts and postcards to take with us. After we climbed the 200+ steps to the top of the tower we exited a stairway onto a great platform where we could see far across both borders. Renata pointed out her house in the distance. I told her, now, every time I climb this tower I will know exactly where you live. We both just laughed, because we knew that I would probably never find myself on top of this tower again. We made a wish at the wishing well and popped in and out of the little shops in both Poland and Cesky-Tesin. They took us to their favorite Pizza Place where we sat and shared stories and laughed. Finally, as our day came to a close we thanked God for new friends and wonderful memories. Renata and I have exchanged e-mail addresses and plan to continue to share with each other how God is working in our lives. What an amazing blessing for us to get a chance to spend time with them. Renata shared one last verse with me before parting: John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Bo_í Pokoj! (That means God's Peace in Czech) :)

In His Service,
Martha Mitkos
WMGCR2

Date: 2/2/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

We aren't supposed to be here. This was supposed to be the grand wrapup of all things Czech Republic for Watermark, but it seems God had other plans. The last few days

have been quite a mix of time off and being busy – Thursday was a light day in work terms but heavy in emotional terms with our visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau just outside the Polish town of O_wi_cim, also the original name of the camp before it was Germanized. Having taken a class in college on the Holocaust and having been to Buchenwald in Germany two years ago, I wasn't sure what my reaction would be. I mostly had two opposing ones – on one hand, I kept feeling myself detach and look at things on our guided tour from an academic or factual perspective since the information was not new to me. On the other hand, I felt myself trying not to detach, trying to feel and experience the place in addition to simply seeing and observing. I kept thinking about the irony or apparent injustice of us shivering in the cold through our heavy jackets, hats and gloves and feeling some hunger pangs for not having eaten for four hours when 60 years ago hundreds of thousands of people were brought there against their will to live without any of those things and die in ways that defy the imagination. I don't think it's right to say it was a good experience, but I am definitely glad I went there. Even though unspeakable horrors and evil happened there, the mere fact that today it serves as a place of remembrance and education is a testament to God's power to overcome evil.



Steve Ellwein

Friday took us to the Návsí-Jablunkov area for sports and a program at a school – I stayed away from the soccer but jumped in on the volleyball. After a late lunch with many of the youth, we went to the Byst_ice area for time with another group in a mountain cabin on very narrow, very snow-covered roads, almost getting stuck more than once. Yesterday was another day off – Cathleen, Dave, Martha and I joined four Czech youth (about our age) for an excursion to Cieszyn, the Polish half of the town of which _esk_ T__ín (Cesky Tesin if the Czech characters don't display; pronounced something like chess-key tyeh-sheen) is the other part, founded by three brothers and eventually divided by shifting national borders. There is a street market there which was quite crowded, and we also visited the town square and some shops before heading back over the border to an excellent pizza restaurant at which I got the Czech equivalent of "Aussie pizza" (an Australian concoction containing ham, bacon and egg). We had a great time – it felt like we were simply hanging out with friends. Dinner with one of the local church leaders, his wife and our contact Daniel ended the day, then on Sunday it was back to work. Our first program, a Sunday school, was at our "home" of Karmel in Smilovice, then to a retirement home with many of the Czech youth we had seen a week previously (and the four from the day before) and a congregation in T_anovice for a "Bible study." I use quotes because it was much more than that – a few different speakers, some singing, a children's time, a time of prayer and our program to boot. We then had dinner in Czech homes for only the second time here; actually, we were split into four homes – Dave and I greatly enjoyed our evening of dinner, ice cream, games and conversation with Martin & Petra.

So, why was this supposed to be the grand wrapup? Yesterday (Sunday) was the end of our formal programming here in the _eská Republika, with the plan being to take a very early (leaving the station at about 5:30 a.m.) train to Prague and then on to Riesa, Germany to meet our contacts there. However, our arrival in Germany was not expected until Thursday, so we changed the plan, which was probably for the best since last night was a late night and we would probably be running on no sleep after packing. So, we will remain at Karmel until Wednesday, be driven to Prague, and on Thursday morning take the train to Riesa. With the unexpected time, today was a day "mostly off." The girls, Pat and I headed back to the Polish border to the same area we were at Saturday. The vast amount of snow that had been on the ground our entire time here had magically disappeared almost completely overnight from Saturday to Sunday, which made for very different scenery, and a heavy rain at breakfast almost derailed our plans today, but it cleared up enough in time for us to go.

The plan was – bus from Smilovice to Nebory, switch buses and head into _esk_ T__ín (hereafter CT, not to be confused with Connecticut). What actually happened is that we got on the bus to somehow through broken phrases discover that the bus did not go to Nebory, but that we should switch in St_íte_ (Stritez; pronounced something like strzhee-tezh with zh resembling the s in measure – definitely one of the harder ones to say but not the only tough one), the next town over from Smilovice a few minutes' ride away. A few broken phrases and an attempt to read the bus schedule later we discovered that we would not switch to a bus but a train. The plan completely changed but was actually cheaper at 15 korun (just under 60 cents) instead of the 22 (just under 88 cents) than we had been told, plus it was sort of more of an adventure for us. We walked around CT and Cieszyn for a little while, got some team and personal missions accomplished, went for pizza again and headed back for the train to St_íte_. The bus (for visual people, green and about the size

of a short school bus) back to Smilovice was packed; we had to stand in the aisle and people kept coming on, and when we got to Smilovice almost everyone exited. Apparently we shared a bus to Smilovice with the entire population of Smilovice. We were a little late for our team meeting and rehearsal, the only "formal" activities of the day, but still got a lot accomplished. After supper Martha went to a prayer meeting to which she was invited last night, Sune & Dave worked on a project, and the rest of us engaged in what can only be described as a couple of hours of pure insanity. On my last team we called it "stupid o'clock" – the time when all the tension and energy and restraint release, crazy things happen and almost everything seems hilarious. It's a vital thing to have every once in a while, and it's a great thing when we can get close enough as teammates and friends to experience that time together.

We may not have time for it tomorrow – we've planned a full day of meeting, rehearsing, preparing for Germany and of course packing. Time is running out on our time here; on Wednesday we will leave Karmel after over two weeks and go back to Praha (Prague), and the next morning our time in Germany begins as we train to Riesa, meet (or in my case reunite with) the Päßlers (Paesslers if the German characters don't display), our main German contacts, get our vehicle, sound equipment and sales inventory (we finally get to hear the CD we recorded at mid-winter training) and drive six hours to the Wuppertal area. It's kind of strange how quickly we (or at least I) have adjusted to being in this country. As we crossed the border Saturday and again today from Cieszyn in Poland back to CT in the Czech Republic I got the sensation that I was somehow returning to someplace "less foreign," even though I could still hardly read anything or understand anyone when they talked. If I'm feeling like that after two weeks, I wonder how it will feel to go back to Germany, where I have spent two months, can understand more of the language and visited many of the places to which we will go between Thursday and mid-April. That aside, I have greatly enjoyed our time in this country and will miss it when we go, and not just because we are about to leave when I've almost gotten my pronunciations down. Special thanks to Daniel, Ingrid, Jirka, Jarek and everyone at Karmel, all of our drivers and everyone who has prepared the way for us, been with us, cared for us and touched our lives in the relatively short amount of time we have been here. As individuals and as a team we have been richly blessed; we hope and pray that we have been a blessing in return and that we will be only the first of many teams to visit the Czech Republic. Praise God that He can transcend all differences of geography, culture and language to make almost anyplace feel almost like home. We were definitely supposed to be here. – Romans 10:12

Date: 2/7/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings from Nierenhof, Germany! We have finally arrived. After twenty-one hours, two trains, one meal with the Paßlers, one sprinter with a trailer, one traffic jam on the Autobahn, and one stop to call our contacts we finally arrived from Prague, C.R. We are staying with Erin and Nikas Koch. Erin was a member of Watermark four years ago, who met her husband in Germany, and now lives here. What an awesome blessing to have our first stop in Germany with a former teammer.



Martha Mitkos

Today Erin and Nikas took us to Köln. We visited the largest Cathedral I have ever seen! They have been constantly building it since the 1500's and still continue to build. Nikas asked us if we wanted to climb the 300+ steps to the top of the tower, which I would have loved to do. However, it cost 2 Euros. Now, I would have climbed every one of the steps to the top of the tower if it was free. But since we would have to pay 2 Euros I couldn't rationalize paying to torture myself. But I did get a poster of the Cathedral made completely out of musical notes. The stained glass windows were beautifully designed with the full depiction of the life of Christ from birth to death. As Cathleen and I were walking around in complete awe we saw a gated area in front of us with bars from floor to ceiling. Cathleen paused for a moment and one of the Cardinals approached her and asked in German if she needed to confess something. She said, "No, I'm just looking", and walked away quickly. I teased her the rest of the day that she must have a guilty spirit and was she sure there was anything that she wanted to confess.

For lunch Erin and Nikas treated us to Döners. They are a kind of a Turkish food that is served all over Germany. They are served in bread similar to a Pita Pocket with Lamb, Onions, Red Cabbage, White Cabbage, and a Creamy sauce. They were very yummy. After lunch we were walking back to the Cathedral when we saw a street ministry from Holland performing. We stopped to watch and even joined them in singing "Lord I Lift Your Name on High." It seems to be the most universal praise and worship song to date. We also sang it in the Czech Republic. They also did a very intense skit about the devil causing you to sin and being in control of your every action. Much more in your face than Youth Encounter would ever allow. We talked to the pastor and he said that they were trying to start up a church there in Köln. We invited them to our concert the following week and wished them well.

Here in Europe there are many forms of transportation that are used. When we first arrived in the Czech Republic we weren't even in Prague for two hours and we had arrived on a plane, rode a bus to the subway, then walked to the trolley and rode it downtown and walked to the Seminary carrying all of our personal and team luggage and equipment. Here in Germany we walked to the bus, took the bus to the Schwebbahn (This is kind of like a hanging train over the city. It attaches to the track from the top of the car and hangs above the streets), then we walked to the train station where we rode the train to Köln. In America we probably would have hopped in our car and drove there. It is really cool. You can buy one ticket and use it for all forms of public transportation.

Just before leaving Köln we stopped in a bakery and bought some Berliners. They are a pastry type snack that is supposed to be unique to Germany. To tell you the truth, I really think that they are like a jelly donut with sugar on top, but very tasty. Tomorrow morning Nikas and Erin will make us a real American breakfast and we will worship together as a team. I truly thank God for blessing us with them.

In His Service,
Martha Mitkos
WMGCR2

Date: 2/12/2004

Submitted by: Dave Houghlum

Journal Entry:

February ?????? from Nierenhoff

Today we are in Nierenhoff, Germany. It's one of our only stops on the Westside, so we're taking it all in. Today we woke up pretty early and set up at a Hauptschule, which is basically the lowest level of high schools (sort of, you see Germany has its students separated by ability into "tracked" schools). Anyhow, this school was a little intimidating for all of us....remember that movie called "Dangerous Minds?" Well, welcome to a gangster's paradise. Anyhow, we set up our equipment...and moved on over to 3 classrooms. In these classrooms, we talked with the students in English and they asked lots of questions about the USA. Everyone here is so interested in our El Presidente (aka our president Mr. Bush). He doesn't seem to have a very big fan club here.

So we did a concert in a make-shift gym (I think?) It was very "different" for us to be playing music while kids were yelling and screaming and running all around and pushing each other, all the while mocking our music. Team ain't all roses kiddies. And even though when we sang, it sounded like we were singing out of a drive through window, we know that somehow, somehow, God will use that. It's where we needed to be. Then after being done with our 45 minutes of music, we were told that that was just the warm up and that we had 45 more minutes to go! We had to scramble a little bit (we being mostly Cathleen) to find more songs right away, but I think it worked out ok.

After our big autograph signing session that follows at almost any school or concert that we do, we rolled out and did a short devo before going to our next stop, the elderly women's group at the church. We introduced ourselves and talked a little bit and then after a very short break we moved on to our next group, some younger kids. These kids were great and it was pretty exciting to be playing train wreck (a name game where kids have to run around and steal people's seats) while hurdling steaming hot tea pots on the tables. Maybe we should have had a disclaimer so that we couldn't have been sued...wait, we're not in America.



Dave Houghlum

From there, I made it back to my amazing host family. They are a really awesome family. They don't speak very much English, but they try so hard and really make me feel like part of their family. We spend a lot of our time thumbing through our dictionaries and doing a lot of pointing. I also refer to my book "How to Learn German in Just 15 Minutes a Day." (there is no way anyone can learn German in 15 minutes a day...I do not care what people say...I like to eat hay...) Tonight we also went out and got some curry wurst from a restaurant which I liked a lot. One thing that was a little different for me was there was mayonnaise on the fries! My little host sister Steffi and her sister are so sweet. Steffi brought me a flower and has me tuck her into bed every night, and they both have done recorder solos for me and have drawn me many pictures. We ended the evening by watching part of the "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" in German. Sean Connery sounds very different as a German! And finally, I made it to my sweet sweet bed. And tonight, I even figured out how to work the shades that are on the outside of the house so I won't break their indoor shades again...WHY!

Date: 2/14/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Wow! Unbelievable! Overwhelming! Nerve-Racking! Insanity! These are just a few words to describe our concert in Nierenhof, Germany on Valentine's Day. We thought as a team we were ready to give these youth the best program that we could give, with God's help of course; but it seemed like our sound system had other plans. We had visited the schools all week long and had encouraged all of the youth we met to come and have some fun with us.



Martha Mitkos

As we were preparing and sound checking members of the church began to prepare in their own way for the concert. They brought in a huge lighting system and candles, took out all of the chairs, and covered the windows. Little did we know the insanity that lurked behind those closed doors that led out to the fellowship area.

About 15 minutes before the program was to start I needed to use the restroom. Steve was still working on the sound system so I figured that I could sneak my way out the door quickly and come right back. Boy was I wrong! As I opened the door there were some members of the church holding a crowd of youth back from the door. I yelled at the top of my lungs, in German of course, "I need to use the toilet". The crowd of people parted like the red sea and I made my way past the crowd and into the bathroom. I was trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, but failing greatly.

As I made my way back into the sanctuary the room was packed. I worked my way through the crowd to find my teammates anxiously awaiting the start of the concert. This was our first real concert in Germany and we had no idea what the next hour and a half would hold. After brief introductions from our host we started with a bang. No really, a big bang. Our sound system was cutting in and out and sometimes there was no sound at all. Cathleen did half of the skit on top of a chair yelling at the top of her lungs until the sound system came back on. Youth were crowding the stage. Our cables were being sat on, jumped on, and just plain mangled. We had no idea where the problem lay. However, with the help of the soundtech from the church they were able to get the sound system up and running by the third or forth song. That is a long time in a room full of screaming, crazy, excited youth. We were all dripping in sweat from the lighting system and nervous as can be. But after a while we all calmed down and the sound system even calmed down and we were able to relax and enjoy sharing God's love with the people in Nierenhof. One of my favorite times during the night was when Sune shared about how his life has been changed by Christ. He also sang a song about sharing his faith with others and the impact that can have on their eternal life with Christ. It was amazing and the youth loved it! After two encores, 47 T-shirts, 56 CD's, and who knows how many autographs (I think my hand still hurts from writing), we finally got to go back to our host homes. What an UNBELIEVEABLE night. We went from Sheer Terror to Sheer Excitement to Sheer Exhaustion all in a matter of a few hours. It is truly remarkable to see the work that God is doing not only in our lives by testing us and stretching us everyday in our service, but also in the lives of the youth of Germany.

Date: 2/16/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

Every time I think I have something figured out, God puts a new twist on it. Most of our German tour takes us to places that are familiar to me, including our first stop of Nierenhof, near Wuppertal and about an hour from the Dutch border. Even that was different in some ways, however, as it was our first stop whereas it was my previous team's last stop before leaving Germany to return to Denmark. This was the first place we got to experience Germany as a team, and it was wonderful. My host family is one that I remember from two years ago, and we had a great time talking, playing games and practicing English and German. Not as happy of an experience is our sound system. Don't get me wrong, it's actually a pretty good system, it's just that we got off to a bad start. The normal Watermark system, which Watermark/Denmark is currently enjoying, is small and compact, can fit into the Sprinter (our vehicle – a Mercedes that looks like a cross between a van and an airport shuttle) with a little work, and can be set up in a half hour with practice. Not so with this system, which is actually being borrowed without cost as opposed to rented so thanks are definitely in order. This is an actual band system, which means it's big and in some cases more than we even need. (Warning: some "sound-tech-language" terms ahead.) The biggest part of the system is actually my EQ unit, which has four 31-bands (as opposed to one 29 and two 15s in the U.S.) and also contains a CD player, effects unit and power supply for the board, which has about twice the knobs of our U.S. boards. Our (active) monitors would make great mains; about the only thing not the same size or bigger than our U.S. system is the bass amp. To top it all off, it didn't work right until two days ago. Being a creature of habit, I set up the system the same way I set up our U.S. system, and for our first two electric programs the mains sounded like a McDonald's drive-through window only quieter. (At one school, we actually turned the monitors outward so people could hear better.) It continued this way through the beginning of our big, week-ending program last Saturday with about 350 people in attendance. Fortunately, the sound guy at the church has the same board so he looked, worked his magic and suddenly we could be heard again. So, after my introduction to the wonderful world of inserts and balanced outputs (don't worry, I only partially understand myself), our system is healthy and I'm sure I'll come to love it more and more (except when we carry it in and out) as we keep using it.

Adjustments to a new sound system aside, it was a great week-plus in the greater Nierenhof metropolitan area. All good things must come to an end, however, and yesterday marked our departure with many goodbyes and pictures taken after the Gottesdienst (worship service). Five hours later we were in our next destination of Nordhausen and the fun began anew. Darkness had fallen by the time we got to the city, which coupled with the naturally small German street signs and the fact that the directions were written in German made finding our way an adventure. One hour and driving through literally almost all of the city later we finally found our now-beloved August-Bebel-Platz (the street on which the church is located), and even then we somehow got off the street twice before finding the church. Today marked our first full day in Nordhausen and the first time a team has visited this city at the foot of the Harzgebirge (Heart Mountains), which once served as a no-man's-land and location of surveillance equipment on the border between East and West Germany. We are now in the former East, and the difference is noticeable – my temporary hometown of Suelzhayn, for instance, was once a destination for tourists until it fell victim to the neglect of the DDR government; to this day many beautiful old buildings are falling into disrepair with no owners. The people are still wonderful, however, and they are quite eager to host a team and show us around the area. Today we visited a huge monument honoring the former Kaiser Wilhelm I; I even climbed on it a little, to the dismay of Martha and Kat. Part of the afternoon was spent with their youth band playing and singing (including a couple of German songs that we may try to pick up). In the evening was our acoustic program in the basement. I should explain that this is not so much a church as a Gemeinschaft, a sort of fellowship house affiliated with but not located

in the church, where youth events and other church meetings happen. Anyway, this was the first of three consecutive nights on which we will have programs here, which proved to be a test of our programming skills but it looks like it's going to work – encouraging to know we have that much music either ready or ready enough to throw in and see what happens. In addition to the programs tomorrow and Wednesday, we'll be taking a walking tour of the city, visiting a youth house which is somewhat similar to a foster care situation, and possibly visiting another concentration camp (Dora when it was a subcamp of nearby Buchenwald, later the independent camp Mittelbau – unique in that it was not a death camp but truly a work camp where rockets were manufactured) before heading to Gotha on Thursday.

So, what about the twists? I learned a lot in my first year on team about what international ministry is like and what Germany is like, but I am getting new dimensions to that knowledge every day. Places that are familiar are working just a little differently, and we are here now in a place that is completely new for Watermark. I've learned a lot about sound equipment, but this system makes me do things in ways other than what I originally learned. Simply being in a different culture puts twists on what it means to do ministry, to communicate with and relate to people. Normally I am a creature of habit and change is something concerning or bothersome to me. Over these three years I have noticed God putting a twist on that as well, and I hope that change continues. We had another reminder today as well. Sometime over the course of the day Cathleen got a splinter in her finger – she didn't know when; she just looked down at some point and there it was. We tried to help her take it out a couple of times but she put it off, a natural reaction since removing a splinter can hurt. Eventually we took it out and she felt better right away. Things like sin, problems on team or between people, attitude problems and the like are like splinters sometimes. When they first get in they are small and we hardly even notice. Eventually we feel a little pain in the finger, look down and see them. Removing them – addressing the situation and trying to correct it – can be painful, though, so we seek to avoid the hurt and just leave it alone. With a splinter, that's when it goes deeper under the skin (making it harder to remove) and infection can develop, which is far more painful than the momentary pain of removing the splinter. So it is in life. Whatever the situation, whatever the pain, whatever the splinter, may we have the strength, courage and long-term thinking to face it, correct it and continue in whatever ministry God has called us to. – Matthew 5:23-24, Ephesians 4:26

Date: 2/21/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

This past week we traveled from West Germany into the Eastern portion. It has been almost 14 years since the fall of communism and the effects are still very evident. This can be seen not only in the buildings and historical monuments, but in the people as well. The Youth in Eastern Germany live much harder lives than those in Western Germany. Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are a problem for a number of the youth here. This week we have been doing acoustic coffee house style concerts in Nordhausen and working with the Youth in Gotha. We have been in the basement of a church owned building called a Gemeinschaftshaus. These are usually worship buildings in the heart of a small city or town. They are usually connected with a church 20 or 30 kilometers away. However, the youth that attend the programs or open Kaffee times are usually kids that hang out on the streets and are not necessarily Christians. So it is really good for them to have a caring and open environment to come and hear the word.

While we were in Nordhausen we got to spend some time with their youth praise band. We hung out in their rehearsal room and listened to them practice and share new music with us. There were two songs that really struck me, and I hope that we can do them as a team on our return tour. One is called Vater, Ich Danke Dir and the other is called Etwas in Mir. It is always really exciting to hear good German worship music written by Germans. Not English songs translated into German. We were even able to get copies of the music. So maybe you will be able to hear one or both of them on our return tour in the states. Our contacts here have been amazing. Because the schools were on Holiday we got to spend a lot of time with our contact and some of the youth. We traveled to a



Martha Mitkos

national monument, a concentration camp hidden within a mountain where they built missiles, and toured a historic church bell tower overlooking the city of Nordhausen. During our outings we got to spend time with the youth and get to know more about their lives.

But the most amazing experience I had was at our last concert in Nordhausen. Like I had said before, earlier in the week we were doing coffee house style concerts and they asked if we could set up our full system upstairs for the last night. We were kind of apprehensive about using the whole system. The room was really too small and we thought that a system would really be too much. But we decided that if that was what the contacts wanted then that is what we will do. So we unloaded our system and began to set-up. As the start time was approaching this small room packed with all of our equipment was beginning to fill up quickly with youth and adults alike. It would be a very intimate setting. So, the program went on without a hitch and afterwards we were talking with the youth when a girl approached me and began with this question. "I want to know more about you. Does your family miss you? Are they just waiting for you at home?" These questions led into a flood of questions. This young girl shared with me that she had tickets to see the performance of Faust at the theatre and chose to come to our concert instead. She had tried to come the night before but by the time she made it to the Gemeinschaftshaus the concert was over. She had shared that she wasn't a Christian. She had heard of God but didn't really know a whole lot about him. At this point I was afraid that with the small amount of German I knew and her limited vocabulary of English that I could not efficiently communicate everything to her. So I asked Cathleen to join us in our conversation. We began to share about our faith and what Christ had done for all of us. We opened Cathleen's German Bible and shared verses that had really touched our lives. Then we gave her a list of Bible verses and encouraged her to read the Bible and seek Christ. Cathleen then asked her if she had a Bible and she said no. So Cathleen said, "Take mine." We asked her to read the Bible, Seek God, and pray that he will touch your life the same way that he has touched ours. After sharing how touched we were that she came to talk to us we prayed together and said our goodbyes. I always feel an intense rush after our programs. That not only is God working in me, but the people that come to our programs. What a blessing to be able to share our faith and Christ's love with people that we meet each day. God was working in this young woman's heart to challenge her to skip a performance of Faust that she had bought tickets for a long time ago and was anxiously awaiting to come hear a small Christian group called Watermark share their music and God's love in the hall of a Gemeinschaftshaus. Praise God! We never know when God is going to fill our lives with people that challenge us to proclaim our faith boldly and without fear. May God challenge you to share your faith with someone who doesn't know about Christ's love.

In His Service,
Martha J. Mitkos
WMGCR2

Date: 2/23/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Contradictions seem to be an important part of this ministry lately. In the last few days we have been in Gotha, located in the middle of Germany in the state of Thuringen. (Germany has 16 states, for those who are interested.) I remembered this as the place where we most struggled with language two years ago, and that memory proved to be correct. Very little English is spoken except by a few, and we are coming to realize just how heavily we depend on Cathleen and her German skills as she has been losing her voice lately. When she and Sune did not join us in our trip to Wartburg (the castle where Luther hid out and translated the Bible into German) on our day off last Friday I supposedly became the "main German speaker," meaning I did what I could in the way of translation but mostly sat back and let it happen. My host home also spoke no English, making it difficult to have more than the most basic of conversations. It frustrates me that I don't remember and/or didn't choose to learn more German coming here, but God is bigger than language barriers and somehow we were able to communicate. Overall, the time in Gotha was good – I saw more of the city and the Altstadt (old city; a market area with many historic buildings) than I did previously, and Cecily (one of our main contacts) came out to see us and surprised us by bringing Thomas (a member of the Riesa youth group that attended several of our concerts last time around) and Ferdi



Steve Ellwein

(a resident of Dresden who was on Captive Free Northeast last year) with her. The church in Gotha is doing great things in terms of outreach to students they call "street kids" – not because they live on the streets, but because that is where they spend most of their time – teenagers who are not Christians, many of whom either have been and/or currently are in very hard situations in their lives, and many of whom would sadly not be let through the door at an American youth group meeting. Our contacts marveled at how the youth director continues to have such a heart for these students, and after the tenth cigarette, the twentieth use of language that would make our mothers blush and at least three times asking for Kat's phone number, we were inclined to marvel with them. Christ loved and welcomed all people regardless of background, dress, behavior and whether or not they loved and welcomed Him, and while it is sometimes a little hard and sometimes very hard we are called to do the same thing, which Simon demonstrated for us in Gotha.

Yesterday we moved on to Jena, less than an hour away. After arriving early and waiting at least a half hour in McDonald's for our contact Philipp (who looks about the same as two years ago), we made our way to our host homes, which in the guys' case was Philipp's house. This is one of our shortest visits while in Germany; if you don't count last night we really only have two days and part of a third here. Schools in Thuringen have resumed after their semester break, so this morning we visited the Angerergymnasium. Schools in Germany work a little differently, with what we would consider junior high and high school divided into a few different types – Hauptschule, Realschule, Mittelschule, Gymnasium – according to students' demonstrated ability levels and parental decision in the 5th grade. Gymnasium is the so-called "highest" level, from which most of the students interested in continuing their studies at University come. As such, it is typically at the Gymnasiums that we find the students with the most interest in learning, the best handle on English, the best behavior & most respect, and the most hope for their futures (the difference between a Gymnasium and a Hauptschule in that area alone is striking). That's a blanket statement and it's not true in all cases, of course, but that generally seems to be how it goes. Instead of our more usual method of visiting classrooms, at this school we had an acoustic program for all of the 10th and 11th classes, including two exchange students in their first day at the school – one from Russia and one from California, which was exciting for us (as well as for Brian, who has been in Germany for about five months at this point) as we had someone to speak good old-fashioned accent-free American English with besides each other. After that we had a bit of time to prepare for our concert. Similar to Nordhausen, in our time in Jena we have two concerts in the same place tonight and tomorrow night. We are stretching our repertoire, and tonight we threw in a few new songs (some so new they had first been rehearsed that day). It made the program a little rough at times, but often the times when we plunge headlong into something not knowing if we are completely ready are the times we get better (much like starting a year on a Youth Encounter team). Plus, the mistakes were basically only noticed by us and those in attendance seemed to look past the occasional dead space and enjoy themselves, so in my view it was worth it.

Tomorrow we visit another school and take a walk around Jena with members of the youth group (i.e. roughly our age). I am looking forward to that because this is a great youth group, many of whom I remember from last time and they are a lot of fun, and also because we formed something of an attachment to Jena on our last tour. It is a city full of contradictions. The old and the new collide here – walking out from the front of the church you are on an old cobblestone street with historic buildings including a tenth century Catholic church, and walking out from the back you can see the remains of a castle also about a thousand years old. Either way, dominating the background is a silver skyscraper that is the headquarters of Intershop, one of Germany's leading information technology firms. Faith is contradictory as well – the youth group is awesome and it is doing great things, but the city as a whole is a university town and is about 90% agnostic. It is a city greatly in need of prayer, but one that has been an incredible blessing to my last team and I'm sure will be for this team as well. One more funny story: on Wednesday morning we visit the Gesamtschule (sort of all the types of high schools in one building) near the church. We had a concert here two years ago which we were told started at 12:30, so we arrived at 11:30 to begin carrying in our equipment. I should mention that in German schools the Aula (auditorium) is normally on the top floor, so we carried our entire system up four or five flights of stairs. By 11:55 we had gotten everything up and were beginning to set up when our contact came in and asked if he could let the students in. We didn't think anything unusual of the request until we realized that the concert was to start at 12:00, not 12:30. So, we quickly tore down what little we had set up and did the concert acoustically. After the concert, we proceeded to carry the equipment that we did not use down the same four or five flights of stairs. I think the plan is for us to be acoustic this time, and we'll be double checking when we start. Sometimes things happen that go against what we would expect or

want – carrying in everything for an impromptu acoustic concert, a city with little overall faith but rich in church history, rough spots in a program that should be smooth, loving and welcoming the seemingly most unlovable that we would want to keep at the greatest distance – but fortunately God is bigger than our expectations or wants. What seems like a contradiction to us is a part of God's perfect plan; may we always have love for all of God's children, the self-control to relinquish control and the readiness to expect the unexpected. – Isaiah 55:8, 1 Samuel 16:7b

Date: 3/1/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

I've been thinking a lot lately about familiarity and the "fishbowl effect." Over the last few days we have been in the Vogtland region of Germany, on the northwestern border of Sachsen (Saxony) where it meets up with our former location of Thuringen. We spent Wednesday through Saturday based in the town of Reichenbach, just outside of Plauen and home to the Goeltzschthalbruecke, the largest stone bridge in the world. We had the usual drill of school visits for question-and-answer sessions, although this time one of the teachers had a board game to direct the conversation, which helps when the students have trouble thinking of questions or are too shy or nervous to ask them in English. On the other hand, a few of us also visited an after-school program at Reichenbach's Goethe-Gymnasium called the Cambridge Club, which is a group of students working through a special English course with the goal of eventually studying in or making an extended visit to an English-speaking country. As such, these students were interested in speaking English and a little more practiced at it, which made it a lot of fun for us. Our concert was not in the church but a sort of hall for hire called the Begegnungsstaette, which is convenient since we have just discovered that Begegnung is the German word for Encounter. This was one of the handful of concerts we have where we really feel like a "rock band" – lights down in the hall, colored lights on us (fortunately no smoke machine this time), a very youth-focused atmosphere. It seems odd to think of ourselves as "rock stars," which we still don't consider ourselves, but it was fun for that night. Saturday morning we walked around the Reichenbach town square, a local castle formerly used by Kaiser Karl IV and the Goeltzschthalbruecke taking our overseas publicity photos which will be used on our return tour, then after lunch it was off to Pausa, a town of about five thousand an hour west of Reichenbach but still in the Vogtlandkreis. The evening of our arrival we had a Jugendstunde (literally "youth group hour") that started at 7:00 and broke up somewhere around 10:30, but it was a lot of fun to spend time with a great youth group and lots of music. We did a song exchange of sorts, with us doing a few of our program songs and collectively doing what seemed like every English song in the songbooks used here, but I got to practice my spontaneous bass skills. Sunday we had a worship service in the morning and that was it, making it the closest thing to a day off we'll have this week and possibly in the next week as well.

Today our day began with a visit to the Gymnasium in Pausa. Our schedule had said we would meet at 7:30 in the morning, so we were pleasantly surprised when it turned out to be 9:00. It is fairly common in Germany for the team to be split into two groups so as to visit more classrooms, so we went to four classes in two hours (periods). After the classes we went into kind of a more open area in the hallway with tables and a vending machine that is used during the break. German schools typically have as much as 10 minutes between classes, a 20-minute "small break" earlier in the morning and a 30-40 minute "large break" around noon – it serves as lunch time but not everyone uses it since school can end as early as 1-2 p.m. Anyway, we were in this break area during the large break to play music and promote our concert. As packed as it was by curious students (many of whom we had not visited in their classrooms) it felt like the entire student body was in this little area. After school we had a little time off which I used to explore the town a little – Pausa calls itself "the middle-point of the world" and to emphasize that fact the Rathaus (town hall) is topped with a slowly rotating globe with that slogan on it. Eventually the time came to set up for the concert I had been looking forward to and dreading since arriving in Germany. Our Pausa concert is not in a church or a Gemeinschaft but in the Jugendclub (youth club), which we immediately knew was not our typical setting when we walked in and saw the large Jaegermeister banner on the wall. The smell of stale smoke was everywhere, but it was quickly replaced by a much greater quantity of fresh smoke (not to mention a fair bit of Jaegermeister and other kinds of alcohol) when we came



Steve Ellwein

back for the concert and people started arriving. We opened the window by the stage, but that didn't help me much being at the sound board most of the time. (Perhaps this would be a good time to mention that Martha and I are allergic to cigarette smoke, Martha more so than me – I don't know how she managed as long as she did.) There were students from the schools we visited, students from the streets – there were some from the youth group, but many of the people at tonight's concert would never set foot in a church and that alone made the evening worth it (that plus we made some of our songs a little more "electrified" than we normally do, making it pretty fun). It was a hard concert to play, but despite enduring a few hours of smoke you could see in the air the entire time, despite the buzz of conversation that didn't stop for our skit or sharing, despite any of that, Christ was preached in a place where it doesn't usually happen to people who don't usually hear it, and that is enough.

Tomorrow both of our events are in nearby Zeulenroda. We'll have a few classes and an acoustic concert for about 150 students at the Friedrich-Schiller-Gymnasium, which we'll have to do without Dave when he leaves for physical therapy on his finger and possibly without Martha if her voice got too damaged tonight. Then, in the evening we have a concert at the Gemeinschaft in Zeulenroda which should have a completely different Stimmung (atmosphere/mood/feel) than tonight's concert – more of a church crowd (although there will probably be some students from the school), a church setting, and probably acoustic to boot. On Wednesday after a quick supply stop in Plauen it's off to the Erzgebirge (Iron Ore Mountains), farther south and close to the Czech border. We're into the part of our tour where many things and people have been and will be familiar to me. I have visited the Goeltzschtalbruecke in Reichenbach and the Rathaus in Pausa, and the schools in both towns as well. I have vivid memories of the Reichenbach Begegnungsstaette and Pausa Jugendclub and can visualize the school in Zeulenroda we don't visit until tomorrow and the church in Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge we won't see until Wednesday, even though two years have passed. The strange, slightly exciting and more than a little scary thing is that people remember me as well. In many of the places we have been to – the Gemeinschaft in Reichenbach, the youth group in Pausa, people in Gotha and Jena before that – at least a few people come up to me without my having said anything and mention that they were at one of our concerts, saw me in their school, etc. two years ago. It amazes me that people would remember me two years after a few days' (or even one day's) visit – I've never thought of myself as being that memorable – but it's an example of the "fishbowl effect" common to all teams. This year we live our lives on display, and it seems to be even truer in the international phase of our tour. Even the shortest of chance meetings leaves an impression and can have a lasting impact. It's sometimes fun when we witness it, but it's also a reminder of what a great responsibility we have and our need to live as though eyes are always upon us (because they often are) and "conduct [ourselves] in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27). As Tiger McLuen reminds us during training, our job is to stand in front of the cross, get everyone to look at us and then duck. Just as my memories and people's memories of me remain after two years, so this team will leave its mark. In schools and churches, smoky clubs and cozy Gemeinschafts, may our words and actions be pleasing to God and may people's memories of an encounter with us be memories of an encounter with Jesus. – 1 Timothy 4:16

Date: 3/8/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

How do we give love to each other? How do we receive love? What happens when the two are out of balance? I've been thinking about that over...well, the last few years, but particularly the last week. We have now ended our time in Oelsnitz. There are actually three towns by that name in Germany, two of which are somewhat close to each other, so I should properly say Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge. Oelsnitz/E. (as most of the signs say) is located at the foot of the Erzgebirge, or Ore Mountains, which once served as a mining center (Oelsnitz has a pretty interesting museum devoted to that subject) and which occupy southwest Sachsen right down to the Czech border. It was a busy week and a week of firsts, most notably the first time we completely improvised a Bible study and the first time some of us (as opposed to all of us) did music in schools. Saturday ended with another of our big blowout, few hundred people come, full force concerts, which are always a lot of fun. It was encouraging to see how many students from the schools we visited were at the concert, and I got



Steve Ellwein

another nice surprise as well. At one of the schools I had mentioned that I have become something of a coin collector in Europe as I attempt to get a full set of euro coins. (For those who don't know, the euro is the common currency that since 2002 has been used by 15 European nations including Germany. The coins are the same on the front but the backs are unique depending on the country in which they were minted.) While we were still at the school a few of the students brought coins for me to trade, and on Saturday two of them came up to our display table with a film can. In that can were coins from all over the place – Finland and France pre-euro, England, Norway, Switzerland, Hungary and more. My first reaction is that I should mention coin collecting in schools more often. More importantly, though, it reaffirmed for me that what we say and do in schools is heard, is understood and makes a difference. My prayer is that the students and teachers hear me when I talk about God as clearly as when I talk about coins, and that I do more of the former than the latter. (I'm still hoping for a full set, though.)

We are still in the Erzgebirge, but we have now moved from Oelsnitz to the Marienberg area, literally minutes from the Czech border and less than two hours' drive from Prague. We're more in the mountains now...okay, by mountains I really mean something more like glorified hills, but they make for some great scenery nonetheless, even with the foot or so of snow that still blankets the area. Watermark does not go to Bayern (Bavaria) and the rest of southern Germany since the south is mostly Catholic and we work through the Protestant (a.k.a. Lutheran) church which is more predominant in northern Germany, so this is as close as we get to the gorgeous mountains and beautiful forests that many people associate with this country. What we have is wonderful, however – a medium-sized Gemeinschaft which is actually a little outside Marienberg on a winding mountain street in the village of Gebirge. We'll be going across the entire region this week but this will be our home base, and it was the site of our first program in the area tonight – a "Teeniekreis," or meeting of teenagers, roughly 12-17 from the looks of it and almost entirely girls. It was the usual format for a meeting of this type for us – some songs, a question and answer time, and a few games that were unique tonight in that they were particularly chaotic, which hopefully made it fun for everyone involved. Before going to our host families (which for the guys is actually a guest house of sorts) we had supper at the Gemeinschaft and re-created our final evening at Karmel in the Czech Republic by lighting the candles on the table, turning off the lights and puzzling/worrying our contact. A fairly light day compared to what we have been getting, and Wednesday is a day off – our first in 19 days – but the rest of our time here will be busy again. A typical day during the week seems to be morning into afternoon at a school (familiar ones – we're going to Olbernhau with classes in the music room, Zieblitz with multiple classes at a time, Marienberg with a program in an open area of the hall), maybe some kind of meeting in the afternoon, and an EC meeting (Entscheidung fuer Christus or Decision for Christ, basically a youth group meeting) in the evening in towns like Lauterbach, Seiffen and Doernthal.

Team life can sometimes be a difficult thing, and this time of year seems to be tough for a lot of people. I love being here and experiencing new things (and re-living some old ones in my case), but we are away from just about everything that is familiar to us – except for each other. We often say in schools that we are like a family – since our family and friends are thousands of miles away our teammates are the only family, the only support system that we have physically available to us. The ideal is that we would always be aware of each other and always seeking to reach out in love to each other in the ways that each person needs to receive it, whether that's a "five love languages" thing or whatever other formula or lack thereof you want to use. The problem with that is that we are human beings and our human relationships don't always work perfectly. One of my former teammates once said that she couldn't always be the one pursuing in team relationships, and I am coming to understand more and more what she was talking about. Relationships – any kind of relationships – need to be two-way streets. We need to put a lot of work into reaching out to and approaching other people, but sometimes we need to be reached out to, to be approached, to have some kind of confirmation that the feelings of friendship, care, etc. we have for a person are mutual. When we don't feel love coming from other people (whether it's real or imagined) we tend to pull back and not be as willing to give love, which creates a destructive cycle. Rather than worrying about who will make the first move, then, the best thing would be for everyone to make the first move. I'm as guilty of not doing it as anyone, and I'm not even completely sure where I'm going with this. All I know is that in a lot of ways the six other people on this team are all we have to lean on, and to focus on some relationships to the actual or perceived exclusion of others is not helpful to the team or the individual or the ministry or anything. Sorry if this doesn't make much sense, and in the interest of keeping journals positive I should say that it's not as bad as this paragraph is probably making it sound, but it's one of the big things I think about regarding team life and it's

become particularly meaningful to me in the last week so this is the journal where it comes out. I want the best for this team, and my prayer is that we would be always unified, always caring, always willing to show love to everyone, including each other. Maybe it's not a perfect world, but who says we can't give it our best shot? – Philippians 2:1-4

Date: 3/10/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:



Cathleen Gosselin

Tonight I'm sitting in the living room of my German host family in Gebirge near Marienberg near Chemnitz. In a candlelit room with soft music in the background, a couple feet of snow outside, and inside the house it's nice and toasty. It feels like Christmas, but it's March!!! Sometimes we wonder when spring will come in Germany—we keep getting more and more snow! It's very pretty here, the landscape is a lot like northern Minnesota. It's been so cold for our overseas tour that we've already taken the liberty to rename our group "Watermark Antarctica"—no seriously, we have! Today was our day off, our first in like 2 weeks! We were all really exhausted and completely spent, so today was super nice and much needed for our group, I haven't relaxed this much in a long time. Martha's upstairs relaxing in a bubble bath...it's a good day for all of us. Our team really needed some time to rest and just let God fill us back up. We're been super busy each day, visiting like 4 classrooms all morning, doing a small concert in the school, then visiting like 2 different youth groups in the evening...and on Sunday we're leading 3, count them THREE, church services each in different villages!!! So needless to say, today is a good day of rest! God rested after 6 days, and by golly, I firmly believe that we should too! J God's good! (Fun fact about right now: I'm drinking some kind of juice, but I have no idea what it is because I didn't recognize the German word for the berry (that happens a lot!). It's a good evening...it's been a good day.)

Our host family took Martha, Kat, and I out to dinner tonight in a little German restaurant. It was so cool and traditional! Our host family decided to park like 3 kilometers away so we could walk to the restaurant through the beautiful snow-covered woods, and when we arrived we were greeted with a jolly "Guten Abend!" from the other guests at the restaurant. The restaurant had deer antlers up on the walls, a huge koo-koo clock on the wall, wood tables and chairs, and a waitress wearing a Dirndl...totally warm atmosphere...totally cute...totally German! Our host family doesn't speak much English, so have to translate everything, which I honestly like to do! Sometimes I get very tired from translating all day though, and frustrated that I have to pay attention all the time, and I tell my teammates about once a day that I'm not translating anymore...that usually lasts for about 30 seconds and then I realize that it's ok that it's hard, that I do really like it, and I'm good at it, and I keep on translating. J So speaking of being the translator, we got the menus tonight and they're written in old German script, which is super hard to read! The s's look like f's and all the capital letters just look like scribbles. But it was fun to try and decipher what it said and to help Martha and Kat figure out what they were going to eat! Eventually Kat just said "Cat, I trust you, just order me something!" It was fun. Kat ended up getting Putenschnitzel (fried, breaded turkey, I think, she liked it anyway) with potatoes and veggies. Martha had Wurst (bratwurst). And I had Schweinebraten (pork)...very delicious, very hearty, very German!!! It was a fun evening and I think that it was the first time that we went to a restaurant for dinner in Germany.

Tomorrow we start back up with ministry in the schools at 8am, and we will go all day with classes, concerts, and youth groups. But right now, I can rest and I'm thankful for that! I'll end with a story that will maybe help some of you understand why our English is getting worse (you may have noticed a difference and wondered "Why do the people on Watermark talk like small children with bad English?"). Well, here's a story for you that dates back to the Czech Republic! In the Czech Republic none of us had any idea what the Czechs were talking about when they spoke Czech back and forth to each other, but sometime we pretended to understand it as a joke. And we would try to translate it to each other, just for fun. Like if they were giving us a tour of some building and said something in Czech and then just started walking to another room, we had NO IDEA what was going on, but we would turn to each other and say "We go here now". J But in our translations of their Czech, we spoke English like they did. For example, phrases like "We go play in snow now", "Now we eat", "You want drink?", "You have boyfriend", and "When you like eating?" were what we heard, and found super cute, and thus what we repeated. Finally it became so engrained in our ears

and in our heads that we began to talk like that. So if I were to not pay much attention while I type this, I might slip into the broken English that we've been hearing for the last couple of months! The English that makes us smile and reminds us of the wonderful people we meet overseas. I'll give you a little taste of a possible conversation: Speak you English? Yes. I speak the English. We have good time in Germany. Soon I go to bed. When I stand up? At seven and one quarter. Then I eat breakfast. We play in snow? Yes. We go play in snow now. Alright, that's enough! I just wanted to share in the humor we have with the languages here. Czech, German, broken English, and soon Romanian! With the language and with some situations overseas we're sometimes left totally confused and when that happens, we figure we can either laugh or cry. We choose to laugh! And we've been having a great time learning and trying and learning some more! The people here are amazing and loving and fun and God's made a way for us to communicate in whatever language we use! God's good!!! I hope that gives you a little taste of what life is like here.

I go to bed now. J

God's deep peace, Cathleen
Watermark-Antarctica J

Date: 3/13/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

I would just like to take an opportunity to share with you the most incredible experience I had yesterday afternoon. Our main contact here in Marienberg, Falk, offered to take us to an exhibit called "Die Hütte". Now, while here in Marienberg Falk has taken us to see a lot of things in between the many schools, youth groups, and concerts that we have given. In fact we have been so busy without a day off for a number of weeks that we are all exhausted and some mornings struggle to make it out of bed. But somehow with God's help we manage to find the strength. When we were given the option of going to this exhibit or having some much needed time off to relax or nap, I'm afraid to say I wanted the nap a whole lot more. But after a little persuading from Steve we all decided to go. What an awesome blessing it was. Yesterday's exhibit was not like any I have ever seen before. A man by the name of Gottfried Reichel has spent all of his life since World War II carving the story of the Bible out of wood. He already has 330 figures and continues to carve even more. But the most amazing thing about seeing this exhibit was being able to go from one carving to the next, Bible in hand, and reading the scriptures that Herr Reichel had referenced. I spent an hour and a half walking from one to the next, reading and soaking up God's word. We can picture in our heads as we read what it would have been like to be there in person as Elijah was standing on the mountain top or as Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate. However, there is something truly powerful about seeing an artist's rendition of this first hand.



Martha Mitkos

There were a number of carvings that I was truly touched by and I would like to share a few of them with you. The first one was of a man reading the Bible. It is the first thing that you see when you enter the exhibit. Now as many of you know I began a two year Bible read in January. However, I have become enthralled with the Scriptures and have been fervently studying and reading every free moment that we get. I have already finished Ruth and I am half way through 1st Samuel. So you can imagine how intensely I was searching for the scriptures that Herr Reichel had referenced to see how to apply them to everything I have already read. The first verse was from the 5th Chapter of John, verse 39. It reads as follows, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me." What a pure and simple reminder of why I am here; ultimately to testify of my love for Jesus Christ and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

The second carving was of Elijah standing on the mountain top waiting for the Lord's presence to pass by him. He was pulling his cloak over his face and standing at the mouth of a cave waiting for the Lord to speak to him. The second verse was from 1st Kings Chapter 19 verses 11-13 "The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass

by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave." What a true testament to the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Although he has the power to enter our lives shattering mountains and instilling fear in every man; he chooses to enter our lives like a gentle whisper offering his unconditional love and forgiveness for our sins. Praise be to God.

The third carving was of Ruth and Naomi. This one was special to me because I see Ruth as an honorable and loving woman of God who was willing to separate herself from her family in order to care for her mother-in-law after her husband's death. This was a simple carving of Ruth and Naomi holding hands. I can only hope that God would fill my heart with the same love and integrity and Ruth. "But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or turn my back from you. Where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.'" Ruth 1:16-18. Talk about loyalty and everlasting love for another person.

I will leave you with one final carving and verse. The last carving as you exit the exhibit is a self portrait of Gottfried Reichel carving another figure. The Scripture message was as follows: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 4:10-11. I challenge you to follow in Herr Reichel's footsteps. Use the talents that God has given you to serve him and serve your fellow man doing all to the Glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In His Service,
Martha J. Mitkos
WMGCR2

Date: 3/14/2004
Submitted by: Pat Torbit
Journal Entry:

3-14-04

Well, now that we are at about the halfway point mark for our time in Germany, I figure I should write a journal on everything that has been going on. I apologize for not writing many journals, days here are crazy long, and if we do get some spare time in the schedule, I would much rather go have a snowball fight than sit down and write an essay with ink and paper. However, no excuses, I'm sorry and I will try to write more. The day that I am "supposed" to write on and describe here in Germany is Sunday. Every Sunday here is pretty much the same routine. 1, 2, or 3 worship services and sometimes a little program or youth group in the evening. Well now that we are caught up on Sundays, I'll keep moving on. I'm sure you have heard many accounts from my team members on what our time has been like here in Germany, but I will bust out the "Luke" and just say that after thorough and careful investigation, here is my account of Germany so far. We arrived in Dresden, Germany by train. A train, which was coming from Prague. There to meet us were the Paesslers, Roselinde, and her daughter, Cecily, our main contacts for the duration of our stay in Germany. They had brought along our wheels for the tour. The Mercedes Sprinter, or as Dave says, "Van O'White". Others have quoted it to be "Tighty Whitey" due to the amount of gear we stuff into our white van. After spending a couple short hours with the Paesslers we got in our van and drove to Nierenhof. We got to Nierenhof around 3 AM and our contact, Erin and her husband were there waiting for us. Fortunately, it wasn't raining and they didn't have rain coats waiting there for us. Erin had been on Watermark four years ago and it was actually in Germany where she met her chill hubby- Nikas. We spent up to Valentines day there and the next day we packed up and rolled to Nordhausen. Nordhausen is towards the middle of Germany and right there with the Harz mountains. We spent a lot of our time in Nordhausen in a coffee house type of deal, having concerts there each night.



Pat Torbit

There kids there had off school, so we got to spend a lot of time with them. From Nordhausen we traveled to Gotha where we worked with some inner city kids, and then had programs geared towards the high school and college aged in a town called Jena. From Jena we made our way to the Vogtland area. We had to split in two groups while in the Vogtland schools. The one group was Steve, Dave, Kat and Cathleen. The other group consisted of Sune, Martha and myself. We went to schools with the main translator for the week, Ralph. Ralph spoke British English and with a British accent. Ralph would pick us up in the morning. The first morning Ralph came in his ride with his windows rolled down pumping Eminem through his system. We had a big concert there at the end of the week where many of the students came. After the Vogtland area we made our way to Oelsnitz, like most of the towns before it, we spent a lot of time in the schools in Oelsnitz. After Oelsnitz we went to Seiffen. Where we spent our time schools, youth groups and churches. Today we travel to Torgau. The majority of people in the eastern part of Germany are atheist and to be able to share the love of Christ here is awesome! We get to go into many schools, youth groups and churches. Thanks to all for the support. God Bless, Pat

Date: 3/15/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Team ministry involves so much communication that it's almost staggering at times, so what happens when it isn't there? Today we wrapped up a full week in the Marienberg area – full in the sense of exactly seven days, but also full in the sense of our schedule. We did have a day off on Wednesday (and some of us did indeed go to the Czech Republic for part of it), but the rest of the time was full of schools, youth group meetings, more schools and more youth group meetings. On Thursday afternoon we were in Seiffen, the heart of production of the handmade woodcrafts for which the Erzgebirge region is known around the world. We toured one of the shops and saw the process by which some of the crafts are made. Between stops on Friday we saw an incredible display of one man's passion for Scripture, memory and woodwork at Die Huette in Pobershau. You can read Martha's journal from two days ago for a more detailed description, but I wanted to mention it because it was one of my favorite memories from my first time here and it was an incredible blessing for me to have this experience a second time. (Plus, this time I took a few more pictures.) On Saturday we had a morning program for over 100 children; it lasted nearly two hours so we pulled out every sing-a-long we knew and a few more plus our second attempt at doing our puppet show in German. We managed to get a few hours off before heading to Lauterbach for our big concert of the week, and it truly was big with over 300 people packing the Turnhalle (sport hall; basically a gym). It's a wonder we got set up in time between waiting to have the stage set up and being interviewed by the local newspaper – we were actually eating supper as people were arriving – but somehow we managed to get it done and the program went great. Yesterday was also hectic with three worship services in three different towns. For the morning and afternoon services we arrived at the Gemeinschaft with about five minutes to get set up (fortunately we were acoustic) and virtually the entire congregation sitting quietly waiting for us to start, which was a little strange, but the services were good; at the second one I got to see my host family from two years ago. The third service in Lengefeld was our send-off from the Marienberg area and we were given some Erzgebirge woodcrafts as gifts – a special memory of a special place. It was an interesting week, made even more interesting by the fact that from Wednesday to Sunday I basically had no voice. I was worried that I might be the next on the team to get bronchitis, but my voice is coming back and I never had any of the other bronchitis symptoms, so I think all is well. It was fun to basically play charades in the schools, though, with me making hand motions and my teammates "translating" for me when we did our introductions and when we were answering questions.

Today we had our last meal with Falk and his family, then left the mountains behind and made the three-hour drive to Torgau. It's a somewhat common theory that when people emigrated to the U.S. they chose parts of the country that reminded them of their homelands in terms of scenery and weather, and making the drive through the plains of Sachsen in the still-somewhat-winter air I can see why so many Germans came to settle in what is now southern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota. It reminded me a little bit of home if I didn't look at all the posters for Britney Spears's May concert in Riesa's Erdgas Arena. (No, really. And the weirdest part is that in a couple of



Steve Ellwein

weeks we are part of a multi-band and choir thing in the same place, so we may soon be the only Youth Encounter team this year to have the dubious honor of saying we've played in the same venue as Britney Spears.) And the road signs I'm still trying to comprehend all of. And the Rathauses, huge churches and boxy concrete buildings that pervade the former East Germany. Well, we usually say in schools that the differences are minor and what is similar is bigger, and most of the time it's true – despite all the reminders that this is not in fact eastern South Dakota or southern Minnesota I still felt somewhat at home. It also helped that our navigation was more like the U.S. – instead of attempting to follow directions in German (if you think Mapquest is confusing in the U.S....) we were mailed a map of Torgau and given a time to arrive, so I got to literally make up point-to-point directions for us. It was a test of my navigational skills, but somehow we made it without so much as a wrong turn. This was one of the longer rides we've had lately, although it wasn't quite long enough for the back seat of the Sprinter where Cathleen and Kat were attempting to put braids in Dave's hair similar to the ones Kat got a few days ago – they didn't quite finish, so he was wearing his hat until we got to our host homes (they're next door to each other). Speaking of host homes, the streak has come to an end – Dave and I have shared not only a host home, not only a room, but a bed for 21 of the last 24 nights (the other 3 were with Pat if anyone's curious), but I'm with Sune this time. I hope that everyone involved does all right in adjusting to this major change in our team life.

Our week in Torgau looks like what we've come to expect lately – busy, with familiar places for me. Tomorrow we spend the day in nearby Beilrode, where we will kick off the school day by playing a few songs in the entryway as the entire student body watches from the courtyard, then visit a few classes and have a couple of concerts for the students in the church across the street before our evening program in the same place. Wednesday we visit Joe Polowsky Gymnasium, named for one of the American soldiers who met with Russian soldiers on the banks of the Elbe River at the end of World War II and later became a benefactor of German education, get interviewed for Antenne Sachsen (a regional secular [!] radio station) and make our first visit to a German retirement home. Thursday is busier yet as we visit the local Mittelschule, head to my home of Beckwitz for a confirmation meeting and visit two youth clubs in the evening. I could go on, but you get the idea.

Communication has been on my mind in the last week, mostly because for a while there I lost a major way to do it. It's been said that as much as 90 percent of communication is non-verbal, but I think that percentage is a little lower when it comes to the ministry we do in programs, schools, etc. There were times when I really wanted to answer a question but simply couldn't in the way I wanted to, and hand motions and whispered cues to teammates weren't getting the job done. Still, I was able to convey a lot that way, proving that when one method of communication doesn't work there is usually another way. (On the other hand, team ministry with a language barrier often manages to prove that as well.) Of course, for communication to happen some effort needs to be put forth. So many problems, tensions and misunderstandings happen on team and in life because we don't communicate to each other how we feel or what we need or want or expect or hope...okay, so that's enough of the soapbox for today, but I think you know what I mean. Communication is sehr wichtig (very important). If there is a barrier to it, be that language, personality type, not having a voice or whatever, find a way. Going back to the Erzgebirge region was wonderful and I'm going to enjoy being back in Torgau as well. It all basically comes down to that, at least for what I have room to talk about this week. More next Monday – God bless! – Psalm 121:1-2 (for the Erzgebirge)

Date: 3/17/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

Happy St. Patrick's Day!!!

For the past week I've been getting excited about St. Patrick's Day, because I've come to the point in our overseas tour where I miss the US. Not that I want to come home, because I love other cultures and I feel more alive here, but I also miss some things from home, like American breakfasts, American dinners, Dairy Queen, baseball, giving people five, BBQ, lemonade...ok, maybe it's a lot about food! J Being in Germany has been cool cuz my family has a lot of German heritage, but we are also Irish and I was definitely looking forward to



Cathleen Gosselin

celebrating life with a little Irish twist by wearing a little green today. But when St. Patty's Day rolled around I was distracted because it was one of the first days of spring in Germany and I totally forgot to wear green (sorry Grandma! Don't worry, it worked out later...)! It was such a beautiful day, and if you refer to my last journal, we've been living in the Siberian tundra of the never-ending winter that perhaps have also been hanging around Minnesota, so needless to say, we were totally excited and refreshed when we could walk outside in jeans and a T-shirt! So I was smiling and singing with the birds this morning, all excited to spend another day in the schools, meeting with English classes and talking with the students. When I got to the van (Pat, Kat, Dave, and I are all staying at the same house this week, a whole extended family lives in this huge farm house, and every morning we meet at the van around 8am to drive into town to meet the rest of our team) I was all ready to go to start driving to Torgau with the windows down, but Pat was rummaging around in the back of the van for something. "Pat, dude, come on! Let's go!" Dave, Kat, and I were all just sitting in the van enjoying the morning sunshine when Pat springs around side the van and jumps in wearing a huge green floppy St. Patrick's Day hat and with the biggest smile says "Happy St. Patrick's Day guys!" J That's my Irish brother for ya! He kinda looked like a leprechaun with his green hat and red beard, well, a really tall one! So we started down the road wishing everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day. Now the thing about St. Patrick's Day in Germany is that they don't celebrate it! Why?!?! Well, cuz they're not Irish! No Shamrock Shakes, no green rivers, nobody wearing green, no love! So we thought we'd bring St. Patrick's Day to Germany...I don't know how well it went over, but Pat and I, being the Irish ones in the group, gave it our best shot! When we got to the schools, I drew a huge green shamrock on my hand and with all the green, I think that Pat's and my red hair had a certain glow that day, at least we hoped it did! It was fun, none the less, and I think that being away from home and missing the US made it the most fun and the most enthusiastic St. Patrick's Day that I've ever had! J

Wishing you all the best lads and lassies!

Cathleen J

You can stop reading now, cuz I know that sometimes shorter journals are easier to read, but if you wanna hear more about our time in the German schools, read on!

When we get to schools, we don't really know what's going to happen, usually we visit classrooms, which means between 20 and 40 kids (sometimes the teachers like to take advantage of the American visitors and combine classes, hey, I'd do it as a teacher!) and class periods that are around 45 minutes, but sometimes they are 90 minutes and we don't find out until the middle of the class. It's fun, but sometimes it's intimidating walking into some classrooms and seeing so many punks and Goths, so little clothes on the girls, and so many atheistic and satanic symbols on the students' clothing and necklaces. But even though sometimes I walk into the class and think "oh man, this is going to be tough", we open up with a song or some jokes and the tension just fades away. Then the facades fall and they're just kids and we're just here to love them and let them get to know us. A lot of times their appearances can be tough, but when you get to talk with them, they really are just kids, like us, needing to be loved, needing to be needed, and needing to have fun! So the 7 of us sit up front and the students look us over, we really do use a lot of humor and silliness to connect with the students and to help them feel comfortable with us, but we also talk really seriously with them too about life, about Christ, and about what it's like to leave home and everything we know to serve God, because that's how good He is and that's how in love we are with Him!

We introduce ourselves (all in English to help them learn it more) using a map of the US that we brought over and then give them a chance to ask questions, any questions. Most of the questions are pretty predictable, because wherever we go, the students have all asked the same questions. "Since you are from all different parts of the world, how did you get together?" "Do you play your own music?" "What do you think about George W. Bush?" "Where have you been in Germany?" "Do you like Germany?" "Do you miss home?" "Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" When ever they ask those, we just smile and answer, cuz we have pretty well formed answers by now! They also have asked some pretty good questions, like "Why do you believe in Jesus Christ?" and "Why are you doing this year when you could be working/studying?" It makes us think, but it's also made me better understand this year and why I'm here. I like when the students ask tough questions! Sometimes if they are shy, we ask them question, like about their hobbies or favorite movies, or where they've traveled in Europe. It's fun to get to know them. Then we invite them to our big evangelical concert at the end of the week, hoping that they will be intrigued to hear our music or hear about Jesus, and then we move on to another class.

Sometimes we eat in the school cafeteria after being in classes all morning, which, like in the US, is sometimes sketch, sometimes good! One time we had really good schnitzel and potatoes, but the other day we had really nasty fish. But the lunch ladies are really nice, and it's fun to eat with the students in the lunch room. I think the Germans think we're a real band, and that we're big and famous or something, so I think it's really cool that we have the chance to open ourselves up to the students by going into the schools and being real people and letting them get to know us, cuz then it's less about us and being rock stars, and more about building relationship and having conversations with kids about Jesus. But since they think we're rock stars we use it that Christ may be glorified. For instance, they always want our autographs, I have no idea why, but everywhere we go we sign autographs forever after a concert or a program, so we sign our names, but we also all sign with a Bible verse under our names, to lead the kids to read it, maybe they'll wonder what it is, or wonder what is so important that Sune Beck or Martha Mitkos would possibly sign their name with! And then hopefully they'll read the Bible, and God will use that!

That's a lot of what schools are like. We were also interviewed on the radio on St. Patty's Day, which was cool! I was interviewed in German!!! And Pat and Steve were interviewed in English! It's going to be on the radio this Sunday! Cool, huh? We're trying to get a tape of it, and to get newspaper clips of when we're in the newspaper. Usually it's small towns so the news articles are like "Farmer Joe's dog ran away", "Watermark is coming to town", "Betty's 99th birthday is Friday, please bring a casserole to the church at noon". It's awesome!!! Well today is our day off, and I'm off to cook an American breakfast for lunch today with my host family!

God's love and peace...serious...God's love and peace J...they're the best!

--Cathleen J

Watermark Ireland

Date: 3/19/2004

Submitted by: Kat Goglin

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone!

I have about 10 minutes in between conversation classes so I thought I would explain to everyone why there have not been journals for so long. Watermark Germany has been very busy! Yesterday was a 14 hour day for us, non stop, it was crazy! And our day started today at 6:30 AM. We have early mornings and we are so tired when we get home that it is hard to write. But things have been amazing! We have met amazing people and it is awesome to see God work so much. The Bible says that God is our strength when we are weak, and we have seen that so much! He still uses us to touch kids lives, even when we are tired and/or sick!

We have sent several journals in our mail packet, so they will be posted soon and you will hear more specifics about what is going on here in Germany!

We had a concert this morning at 7:50 AM. Full set up, it was crazy! It was strange for me, because for the first time, I was the sound tech. Last night, my bass just stopped working, so we were without bass. Steve picked up the slack on mandolin! Way to go, Steve! But no worries, we walked to the music store and fixed the bass, so I will be up and going for the next 3 concerts that we have today! Well, I have to run! Talk to you soon!

love, Kat



Kat Goglin

Date: 3/20/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

It's Saturday, and it's a day off!!! Now days off are few and far between during our European tour, and usually on those days we're so tired that we don't want to do anything but sleep or hang out with people not on our team (i.e. be alone!).

Seriously, usually we're exhausted! But for some reason today I feel really good (grace and love of God, I guess!) and I woke up at like 8:30am this morning. So I guess my body is really well rested. That...or that I was really excited for the American



Cathleen Gosselin

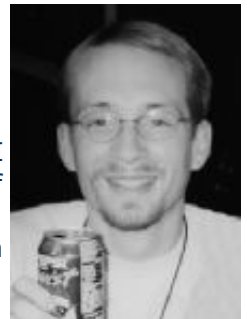
breakfast that I knew I was going to have this morning!!! J Mmhhh mmhhh good! If you refer back to my last journal, you'll remember that I've hit Stage 2 of culture shock when it comes to food (the "Arrgghh!" stage). I love the wonderful bread in Germany and I have been looking forward to it so much since fall, but now sometimes I feel like if I have to eat one more meal of bread with cheese or meat I may just scream! (Note: Germans eat open faced sandwiches for breakfast and for dinner, and if you mention at a school that you really like the German bread like Kat did, then you eat bread for lunch too!). So yesterday at breakfast as Kat and I forced down one more piece of bread with butter, we started talking to our host family about how much we missed American breakfasts. (Note 2: Our host family is absolutely wonderful! They have done nothing but serve and love us, and this whole "I'm going to burn all the bread factories in the world" thing is just a stage and it has nothing to do with our wonderful host family!). Meanwhile, Kat and I began to drool as we described the typical American breakfast that we longed for so much: sausage, eggs, hash browns, orange juice, and pancakes! Our host family thought it would be cool to try, so we made a date to cook an American breakfast together!

Today was the day!!! And by breakfast, I mean brunch, they let us sleep in. J It was so fun, we made hash browns from scratch (Dad, I had no idea of what I was doing, I was just remembering what I would see you do and then try to do the same thing!) and they turned out really good! The Germans were kinda freaked out at the idea of cooking the potatoes and the eggs separately, but we just kept trying to assure them that it would still taste good! So we scrambled some eggs (fresh from their chickens) and fried some sausages and had a wonderful meal! Our host family set out Coke on the table to finish off the American theme and we ate breakfast together. Man was it good. One thing that I noticed though is that it was really greasy, and I was even trying to use less oil and butter than normal because I kept noticing the Germans give me weird looks whenever I would put more butter in the pan. So I used less than I use in the States, but still it was mega-grease city to me! After eating so healthy in Germany for the last months, American food tasted good, but super greasy to me! And it was my own cooking! I think that there are a lot of things that I will change when I come back to the States: #1 less grease. But even though it was a little bit grease monkey, dang it tasted good, and boy oh boy do I love both German and American food! God's cool how He lets people in different places do different things so that they can share them with each other! I think that's cool!

Cathleen J
Watermark Denny's

Date: 3/22/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:

I don't have an English dictionary in front of me (being in Germany and all), but if I did I would imagine one of the definitions for "passion" would be something along the lines of "a deep devotion to, identification with or love for something; something that is close to one's heart." That will become important later. For now I should bring you up to date on the end of our week in Torgau, starting with the night our bass died. We had two youth club programs on Thursday night, which made for a long day following a school and a confirmation meeting. At the first one everything was fine – all was in working order, the kids were having fun and many were actually doing actions on the sing-a-longs, a fun time was had by all. At the second one, we got into the tiny room where we would be playing (possibly the smallest of the year), unpacked the bass, plugged it in and...nothing. We tried everything we knew, but we eventually had to do the program with the mandolin acting as the bass (which actually gave us a little more room), which continued to our Friday morning program at the Johann Walter Gymnasium. It was a poor substitute soundwise (mandolin and bass kind of serve opposite functions) and it probably would have been more fun for people to see Kat rocking up on stage (I know I missed the bass parts on most of the songs), but it was a bit of a thrill to think "hey, I wonder how to play this song on mandolin" as I'm standing in front of 30 students at a youth club or 100 at a school about to play it on mandolin for the first time. Fortunately, it seemed to work all right given the circumstances, and we decided to split the subsequent four class visits between our two small groups so while the other group was in classes my group (Cathleen, Dave, Kat and I) went to the music store. Good news for us – it was one broken wire and one loose knob, and the



Steve Ellwein

bass is back in action. Good thing, because the JWG's Aula (auditorium) is also where our big concert was Sunday evening. The Gymnasium was built up around a former church, with the Aula basically being the sanctuary, which was built in 1513 (the school itself is modern and there are some modern touches in the Aula too). The city of Torgau itself has a lot of history, with the centerpiece being Schloss (Castle) Hartenfels, an actual castle in the city with bears in the moat instead of water. It wasn't possible this time because of an upcoming festival, but two years ago we played in the castle's church, which was one of if not the first designed as a Protestant church after the Reformation – Martin Luther had a hand in designing the church and preached from its pulpit.

Anyway, we wandered the market area and watched kids on the slide for a while, went back and did our classes, then it was off to nearby Weidenhain and a part of their Gemeinschaft they call "Die Arche" (The Ark). This was our first event without our contact (or "manager," as he says) Ronny, who is working for the Torgau church as his civil service, the alternative to Germany's required military service. We actually had two programs, the first being for elementary school age kids and also their parents – another test of how many sing-a-longs we know – and the second being the more general all-ages program. Sometimes Cathleen spreads the love and has some of us put programs together, and Friday night was my turn. I don't claim that it was anything I did, but by God's Spirit it ended up being a very energizing, very worshipful program, a perfect lead-in to our day off on Saturday. Ah, days off – I slept until about 11:00, had lunch and escaped the Pension to wander the mall in Torgau for a while, then hung out at Martha's host home checking email and working on postcards. Yes, I said Pension – after our first night in our host home in Beckwitz Sune and I were moved next door to the home of our host father's parents, which they operate as a Pension, sort of a cross between a bed-and-breakfast and a spare room in somebody's house. Odd situation, but we had a TV in the room so I've loaded up on CNN and MTV over the last week, plus part of an episode of "24" overdubbed in German. Speaking of German, we didn't speak a word of English at either place, so it was a test of our language skills as well. Yesterday we had a morning service in Torgau, then a few hours off during which Pat and I climbed the tower of the Marienkirche, the main church which is across the street from the new building where services are held. We met up with Anne and Sune along the way, and with a little searching found the key that would get us to the top where we could see all of Torgau when we weren't holding ourselves steady against the wind. Going up the tower was one of the things I regretted not doing on my last visit, so it was a great experience for me. We then had a service in Losswig followed by a Q&A coffee time next door in the old firehouse, then it was back to Torgau to get ready for the big concert. We packed the Aula – lots of students from the schools, plus an appearance by the Paesslers and their infectious energy as they clapped along and danced like crazy. These concerts are always a great end to our time in a region, and if we couldn't play in the castle this was definitely an experience to match it.

Today was the end for our time in Torgau – we had "brunch" at the church (more like Mittagbrot when it came down to it), then after a quick trip to the castle (climbed the grand staircase – scratch one more thing off the to-do list) it was off to Kreinitz, home of the Paessler family, at whose invitation and by whose incredible amounts of preparation and work Watermark teams have been coming to Germany since shortly after the Berlin Wall fell. We were at their house for a while, then went to the school where we will be staying this week (yes, school – more next week on that, probably), to band practice (more on that shortly), back to the Paessler house for supper and back to the school. Band practice – on Friday we have a concert with the Blaeserensemble, a brass band of which Cecily and Michael are a part, where we are basically the guest vocalists. We'll be doing 10-12 songs with them, consisting of a mixture of solos, duets and whole-team songs. In addition to the whole-team songs, I'm duetting with Sune on "Take Me Home, Country Roads" (due no doubt to my deep connection to John Denver through Gustavus Adolphus College – ask me if you're curious) and "King of the Road" (due to the fact that Sune and I are the only ones that have even heard the song before or know more than the line "king of the road"), and that's indicative of the style of this concert – "O Happy Day," "Summer of '69," "Fun Fun Fun" and "When the Saints Go Marching In," to name a few others. Tonight was our first chance to hear what we sounded like together. We've had the music for a while now, but due to a shortage of time off we haven't had many opportunities to work with it, making the three joint rehearsals we have this week even more crucial. That's basically our next few days – rehearsals at night, schools before that. Both Paessler parents are teachers – Johannes divides his time in religion classes between six schools and Roselinde teaches English and French at two different schools – so we'll mostly be in their schools, giving us more time to spend with our main contacts in Germany. Even though our time in the greater Riesa-Kreinitz metro area is no less busy than anywhere else in the last few weeks, I expect this to be a refreshing

time for us. The Paesslers are very passionate about Watermark's ministry – as soon as a team leaves they start preparing for the next one's arrival in two years. While a team is with them there is hardly ever a lack of fellowship, jokes (mostly from Johannes), stories and encouragement. They truly are a family that has a deep devotion to youth ministry in this area, identification with Youth Encounter and what it represents and love for the teams that travel to Germany to minister with them, of which we are now the seventh. Their passion for this ministry sometimes exceeds our own, their passion for teams and team members sometimes exceeds the love we show to each other and their passion for God and for life sometimes exceeds the zest, energy and interest we show in our daily activities, and I hope that their passion for those things rubs off on us as much as it has on other teams. Passion is an important part of this ministry and any ministry, and I pray for it for myself, my team and all of you. – Romans 12:9-11

P.S. By some quirk of fate (or was it?), the bookstore I went into today had a copy of Webster's Dictionary in English. Here are snippets of some of the definitions of "passion" that I think apply particularly well: "ardent affection," "a strong liking for or devotion to some activity, object or concept," "depth or vehemence of feeling," "something that commands one's love or devotion." Yeah.

Date: 3/26/2004

Submitted by: Dave Houghlum

Journal Entry:

March 26, 2004

So it's been a crazy crazy week in the life of Watermark! We are staying...well, semi-staying with our main contacts in Germany, the Passler family. Well, we are actually staying on the fifth floor of a boarding school here in Riesa. I have no need for the Thigh-master anymore. Seriously, my quads, hamstrings and calves are ripped after going up and down those monster stairs everyday. We keep going and going and going and going, and yet we are not there. Finally, we make it to the top and it's like seeing the Promised Land, minus the milk and honey and add a dusty floor so thick that I have to wear snow shoes not to sink in.

We find ourselves so busy here...Seriously. We get up really early (even the roosters aren't up this early) and head on over to a little diaconical center where we eat some grubbing breakfast before going to our different schools for the day. Our team is broken up into two smaller bite sized groups so that we can reach more students and go to more schools and classrooms. The team I am on consists of me, Cathleen, Kat, and Steve. It has been labeled by our contacts the "Kit Cat Blind Jazzers"...because of the two Kats, Steve (as in Stevie Wonder) and Jazzers for Dave Matthews...weird, maybe, but the Germans named us, remember that!). The other group is named PMS (for, of course Pat, Martha, and Sune).

So we go to the schools from about 8 in the morning until 2 in the afternoon and then grab some food either at the school (hmm....I almost miss American school food, if that says anything). We have met a lot of interesting students and teachers and have been treated very well by almost all that we meet. During the afternoons and evenings we have gone to our "big band" rehearsals. Why you ask? Picture this: people taking their seats, the orchestra tunes up, the blazing lights come on, and out walk 7 people from Watermark in front of a large wind ensemble to perform an evening of American pop tunes. Now, this may seem as a shock to many, but we were the guest vocalists singing in front of a live symphonic band made up of maybe 40 or 50 people. Seriously, it happened! I never, in my wildest dreams pictured that I would be singing and dancing in front of a symphonic band to tunes such as "Fun Fun Fun," "New York New York," "Oh When the Saints"(pronounced oh Vin the Saints, in German), "America the Beautiful," "Summer of 69," "Oh Happy Day," "Only Time," "Country Roads," and of course, "King of the Road." It was definitely one of the most memorable things that have happened so far! And here's the kicker! The audience loved it so much that we did "Fun Fun Fun" again as an encore. Everybody was having fun, fun, fun! (haha...bad joke.) After the concerts we did what most people do after concerts...go for a bakery tour....at 11 o'clock at night. You never know what you'll get here on the road...it's kind of like a box of chocolates (thanks Forrest.). Anyhow, this isn't the only time that we will perform these tunes, but we get to do it one more time! But the next time is the large concert in a stadium in Riesa where about 2000 people will be. This is also the stadium where the lovely Britany Spears will perform in May. I guess you could say that we will be the opening act for Britany Spears....one month in advance!!!! We'll



Dave Houghlum

sound check it for ya Britney and make sure that it is up to your standards (Britany Spears and standards....not something you hear in a sentence every day!). Our poster that says "Watermark" is actually right next to a poster of Mrs. Spears...welcome to the big time. Welp, I can't top a journal that ends with Britany Spears.....so until next time.....

Peace and love from above,
Dave

Date: 3/27/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

We are now in Riesa, Germany with our good friends and local main contacts the Paßlers. Our schedule is as busy as ever, with a new and somewhat interesting experience to boot! Not only are we visiting all six of the schools Johannes teaches at and a few more along the way, we are also singing with a Brass Band called the Bläserensemble. They are a local band that traveled to the United States in 2001 and 2003. The band's director, Herr Wolfgang Haufe, is a man of incredible patience. Here we are, just average members of Watermark-Germany, some with years of vocal training, others with little to none, trying to sing Big Band/Oldies Favorites. I get the privilege to sing classics like New York, New York; America the Beautiful; Enya's Only Time; and many more great hits. The sad thing is I don't think that I am doing Ol' Blue Eyes (Frank Sinatra) any justice. We have been practicing every evening for 2 hours with the Band after spending all day at schools visiting classrooms and talking with students. We show up at practice never knowing what to expect and praying that it will be pleasing to the director. But, last night we finally got to see if our work had paid off. After a quick sound check, a wonderful meal of schnitzel and pommes, and many nervous smiles the concert began. As I counted the 18 bars of introduction and waited for the key change my heart was in my stomach. But, finally it was all over (of course until next Saturday when we have the even bigger concert with thousands of people in the Riesa Sports Arena [the same arena where Britney Spears will play next month]). Cecily told us that we had even made Herr Haufe smile. Something that is quite a rarity from what I understand. But we have had an awesome time hanging out with the band, getting to know them, and sharing our faith. We have even incorporated a few of the Band members in some of our concerts (and let me tell you, Peter's trumpet solo on "Sing to the Lord" is incredible!). We have a row of friends from the band at all of our concerts, sporting their Watermark t-shirts and big smiles. It was also a very heartfelt and sorrowful goodbye for some of the people that we have become very close to. Praise God that we have had this opportunity to spend time with these amazing young people in this new and very different setting!

In His Service,
Martha J. Mitkos
WMGCRR2



Martha Mitkos

Date: 3/29/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

We are starting to celebrate special days, but why can't every day contain something special? Today is special for two reasons. First, it's Tornado Day – on March 29, 1998 a tornado hit my college and the town it is in while I was on Spring Break in my senior year, so my thoughts naturally turn to Gustavus Adolphus College and St. Peter, MN on this day – not only about that event and its aftermath and recovery but also over all four awesome years I spent there, all the memories created, lessons learned and friends



made. Go Gusties! Second, it's a day off, something much appreciated after a full but fulfilling week in the greater Riesa-Kreinitz metro area. We're still a little flush with the success, or at least the lack of disaster, of our concert with the Blaeserensemble on Friday night at the Schloss Grossenhain, a castle which has been renovated into a culture center with a rather nice concert hall in which we played. The songs – some of ours, some of theirs, a lot together – were interspersed with pictures and narration from the band's recent trip to the U.S., and for one segment they showed a few scenes from South Dakota, including Mount Rushmore and Lee Valley Ranch, where teams trained through my first year on team. Right after the emotional impact of seeing pictures of my home, I had to sing "King of the Road," which I only marginally know and still don't completely like the way I sound on. ("Country Roads" went a little better. A little.) Oddly enough, that somehow energized me a bit and I was able to at least somewhat enjoy being up there, and I got to do my newly-invented bass line to "Fun Fun Fun" twice when it became our joint encore. It seemed like a successful experiment (as it was called in the beginning) and we've only heard good things about it so far. We'll do it again on Saturday at the 37-choir festival at Erdgas Arena (which, in addition to hosting Britney Spears in two months, is home to a three-day, four-nation women's handball [not the same as handball in the U.S. – kind of a cross between basketball, soccer and Ultimate Frisbee played indoors] tournament at the same time as the choir festival), so we'll see how it goes. Saturday started early so we could make a pilgrimage to Wittenberg, the place that basically marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Schlosskirche (castle church). We saw that church, the city church, the house where Luther and his wife lived and more, with all of it guided by Johannes Paessler, whose passion for & knowledge of Lutheran history and more than passing resemblance to Luther make me sometimes think of him as "Luther reincarnate." After a quick stop in Torgau to see the castle church there it was back to Riesa to get ready for our concert. I had been telling the team about this concert in the Groeba Kirche since training as one of my favorites from two years ago, and this year it did not disappoint either. Of course, a big part of that is that everything seems to be better when there are Paesslers around.

That fact made yesterday even more special for me – it was my birthday. Normally Sundays are our busiest days, with worship services in the morning and concerts at night. Today was different; we did have one service in the Groeba Kirche, but that was it in the way of official programming. After the service we moved from the school we have been staying in (the one my group visited last Friday, actually) to the home of the Paesslers, and after lunch the first order of business was a birthday celebration. I have the first birthday of the year among our team, but I am the first of five in five weeks so they will be coming quickly for a while. For those who are wondering, I got a coin folder so I can continue in my quest to get a complete set of Euro coins. We then went to a piano concert (not connected to my birthday; Herr Haufe from the Blaeserensemble had already arranged for us to go) in the same place we had our concert Friday night, where we alternated between enjoying the music and trying to stay awake (because we were tired, not because of the music). We then went down to the cellar restaurant and waited for our food. And waited. And waited. I think we were done by the time Pat got his. Fortunately, we weren't in a hurry since today is a day off – most of us got free haircuts from a friend of Cecily's, Martha and I went exploring a bit in Riesa and Cathleen, Kat and I got a tour of what the Paesslers hope will become their new house. It needs a lot of work and there are some other issues to be resolved, but if all goes well it will be a bigger place with more room for Watermark teams and other ministries they are interested in. Overall the day was fairly relaxing, which is good because we are right back into it tomorrow with school and Gemeinschaftshaus visits in nearby Oschatz, a youth detention facility near Zeithain on Wednesday and our departure for Dresden on Thursday.

One of the things I really appreciated about yesterday is that I was made to feel special, both by the Paesslers and by my team. I'd like to think that I'm not really the kind of person who is always seeking attention or needing a steady stream of affirmation just to function, but it's nice every once in a while to feel loved and appreciated, like you're someone who people want to be around. Of course, it was my birthday, which leads me to wonder why every day can't be like that. This is a particularly important concept on team since we are the only constant support system for each other that we have. It's my goal, and I don't always do my part toward reaching it, that everyone should end the day being able to point to some moment or some person who made them feel affirmed or loved or like someone wanted to spend time with them. It doesn't have to be anything grandiose or dramatic; little things mean a lot as well. While I'm thinking of team since I am on one right now, though, it's not limited to that. My encouragement for everyone reading is to reach out to the people around you. If you care about someone or think someone did something good, show

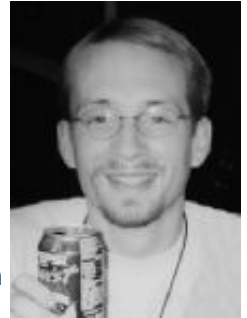
it. If you're struggling with someone, try to make it right. If we all make it our goal to show the same love and concern for each other that God shows for us, then every day will seem special; every day will seem like our birthday. – 1 John 4:10-12

Date: 3/30/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

All right, this isn't technically "my day," but I wanted this story to get out there. Like I said in yesterday's journal, today we have been in the town of Oschatz. The day started with a bang as we dropped our trailer off at the Gemeinschaftshaus where our concert would be (long story), but then got more routine again as we headed off to school – my small group to the Gymnasium and the other to the Mittelschule. After school and lunch we made our way to the park for a devotion and a little time to explore the city, during which Cecily and I climbed the 285 steps to the top of the cathedral tower to get a view of Oschatz that actually almost stretched to Leipzig. Then, it was time to get back for the concert, a special one for many reasons. First, it was the first of what will probably be a few with guests – before the program we ran through a few songs with Peter, a trumpet player from the Bläserensemble we have been working with for the past week, and he joined us on those in the program. Cecily lent her flute skills to "Living Water," and Katja picked up drums on "Romans 16:19." It was fun to incorporate people who have become special to us in a sort of cross-cultural musical exchange. Then, there was my sharing.



Steve Ellwein

Two years ago my first team was also in Oschatz. Something happened to us there that became a part of our team folklore (except that it's true) – an incident which has stayed with me since then. In late December, my current team was in Wabash, IN and I was scheduled to share. Up to that point I had been alternating between a sharing from last year and a short one I had made up (which is to say I gave each once or twice), and I was prepared to go with the former, but as I stood there about to start it seemed I was being led in another direction. Words started coming out of my mouth that I had never actually strung together before, and it ended up (I hope) being a decent sharing. As you may have guessed, it was about the incident two years ago in Oschatz, so as soon as I knew we would be coming back here I knew that I had to tell this story while we were here. It happened just outside of the Gemeinschaftshaus, so since there was still light I got everyone up in the middle of the program, took them outside and told the story. It was incredibly meaningful for me to tell that story where it actually happened, with a few of the people who were players in it standing there with me, and that combined with having to talk loudly to reach everyone outside made it one of the more energetic sharings I've done, an energy which carried on through the rest of the concert. I hope it made an impact on others (the people at the concert or the neighbors who leaned out the window to see what was happening), because it was certainly a blessing to me to be able to do it, not to mention a great reminder to myself of a lesson I learned right here in Oschatz two years ago.

I don't want to give too much away in case you're in a position to hear it, but two years ago we had a decision to make in Oschatz. We could either take our equipment in from the street (the Gemeinschaftshaus is set a little back from the street) or drive on the lawn to be closer to the door. We chose the latter, someone had the idea to back up to the door to get that extra ten feet, and as we made the turn to start backing a wheel went over a sewage drain. It had been raining, so between the drain and the muddy ground we were hopelessly stuck. We tried rocking the van, gunning it, pushing it, but for nearly an hour nothing worked, we kept sinking deeper and concert time was fast approaching. Finally we decided to call Johannes (our contact), who raced to the scene and immediately took charge, with the result that we got right out. Our lives often work the same way. We have good days, but sometimes we have pressure from any of a number of things, we feel like our lives are stuck in the mud and we can't get out no matter what we do under our own efforts. Fortunately, we don't have to limit ourselves to our own efforts; God sees us in that mud and is waiting for us to call on Him, to use His strength which is greater than anything we can come up with ourselves. The problems don't instantly go away, but we have help and maybe don't feel as stuck anymore. That's been my prayer for myself and my team lately, and I extend it to all of you as well – to call on God in good times and bad, to make use of the strength that only God can provide, and with God's help to get and/or stay out of the mud and remain on the solid rock of God's

Date: 3/31/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

March 31st, 2004

Riesa, Germany



Cathleen Gosselin

Today played in a German prison.

Now I'd never been in a prison before, that I can remember, so it was quite a new experience for me. We had driven past the prison a couple times this week, and it looked pretty crazy: huge walls with watch towers, rooms that looked like barracks and razor wire wrapped around the whole thing (that's nasty stuff!). The Paezslers told us that it was a boys' juvenile prison and that it was pretty high security. I didn't really know what to expect, but once again God surprised me and it was amazing!!! The youth group from the Paeszler's church came with us to talk to the inmates too, it was great!

Fun fact #1: We are doing a full set up concert, so we need to get our van and trailer through security at the prison!

Cool experience #1: Cecily told me that everyone must walk through security with their passports, but one person needs to drive the van through security, and that if I wanted a scary experience, I could be the one to drive the van...so I said "heck yah!" and off I went to sit in the van in front of huge blue metal doors as my team was locked inside the building going through security. So I sit in the van and wait...suddenly the doors start to open and I see a narrow entry into a driveway ended by another huge blue metal door which was closed in front of me. When I pulled in the door behind me closed and as I looked around I was surrounded by concrete walls, huge blue metal doors, and above me razor wire and above that the blue sky. This German prison officer starts at the back of the trailer and looks in a little, then he comes around front and looks around in the back of the van...I'm just sitting in the driver's seat looking up in the sky and realizing how good it is to be free. When the prison guard finished looking through the van and trailer he told me that I would have to sit there and wait for a couple of minutes because the inmates were still outside, and no vehicles could drive through while the prisoners were out. So I sat there looking up at the sky through the razor wire, praying for the prisoners and wondering what life was like during and after WWII when more than just 400 inmates experienced life of captivity and of death everyday. (yah, I think a lot sometimes!) God's good!

Fun fact #2: When we set up our equipment, they had lock us up in the building that we play in and everyone leaves and says they'll be back at 4pm, but don't show up till 5:30pm!

Cool experience #2: We set up in the prison school and the chaplain and our contact leave us in the building to set up, but they need to lock us in the building for security and we can't leave!!! Not only that, but all the windows in the 10 rooms of the schools are barred up with metal bars that are quite sturdy (don't worry, I tried to break out, but I couldn't) and we were stuck in there. It was our 2 hours of being locked up. It was weird because it was a beautiful sunny spring day outside, but we were locked up inside. Thankfully they came back and let us out and we waited for the inmates to arrive for the concert!

Fun fact #3: So I'm talking to the prison chaplain about the program and he informs me that I need to include 2 20-minute smoke breaks in the concert!

Fun experience #3: Though we found it HILARIOUS that there were two cards in the program folder labeled "Smoke Break #1" and "Smoke Break #2", the smoke breaks were also awesome!!! We got to sit outside with the inmates and talk with them. Some spoke English, so everyone in our group could talk with someone. I was speaking with a guy in German, but at first it was awkward because he was like my age, but he was in prison, and I didn't know what to ask. I didn't want to be like "So how was your day?" or "So what are you in for?", but again God's good, and he gave us stuff to talk

about...eventually we did talk about his day and about what he's in for, but it wasn't awkward at all! Everyone had amazing conversations during the smoke breaks and I wish that I could talk with the inmates longer, because they don't get contact with the outside world very much and also with Christians. It was good. God's good!

I learned a lot today and maybe one day I'll be a teacher in a prison...who knows? All I know is that God started something in my heart today, and I want to follow Him wherever He leads me!

God's good!

Cathleen G. J
Watermark Germany land of the captive and of the free

Date: 4/4/2004

Submitted by: Dave Hougum

Journal Entry:

Well, another year, another year. Today I turned vier und zwanzig...aka 24 years old. Now today was a rather interesting day because I started out in a host home...normal enough I guess, but my host brother told me he would wake me up with the tuba that he plays, but he was just trying to freak me out and didn't really do it. We lead a church service today in a huge church in Dresden that had a huge echo whenever we said something. I mean, it was great for me because I love hearing the sound of my own voice, but let's be honest here. So the church asked us to lead some songs that were old German hymns and coincidentally, none of us had heard of any of them!!!! (they're not really topping the charts back in Alaska I guess). So, we took our best guess at the tempo and style of the songs and lead the church in these songs. I don't think that I've felt this way since we had to lead the international worship services back in the states....it's always good to be humbled in front of many people I guess.

So after loading up all our equipment into the trailer which had been marked by punk graffiti the night before (Mr. T....our precious trailer...WHY!) with the help of many students who had been at the church for a youth gathering, we rolled out of the beautiful city of Dresden and drove for a few hours onto Leipzig. Now when I think of an ideal birthday, I don't normally think of traveling a few hours in our luxurious Mercedes sprinter, but alas we did. We arrived in Leipzig and eventually made over to our contact's flat (for those of you in the USA, that means apartment, not tire.) I was told to wait outside the room where everyone was....oh the anticipation building and building. They told me not to come into the room until I heard the music. So I waited, and waited, and waited, but hey, I'm used to waiting after some of those drives through North Dakota....finally, music! I walked through the door, and to my surprise (well not really) was my team singing "Happy Birthday" in minor to the tune of "We All Need Your Mercy" from our international worship service in the states. I came over and sat in the birthday boy's seat and they told me to make a wish. But then one of our contacts told me to watch out what I wished for because I might just get it....I didn't heed the warning and wished for.....yeah right, like I will tell you that. Then it will never come true!!!! Let's just say that it has to do with a lumberjack, flippers, Michael Jackson's white glove, and the hit television show "Full House." Guesses?

So then I attempted to blow out all 24 candles on the cake, but unfortunately, I am more out of shape than a Gumby doll who has had it's legs ripped out of its sockets...I guess those long van rides through North Dakota will do that to you. But hey, you don't get a body like this by eating junk food. So, anyhow, I tried to blow out my candles, but it took me like 3 attempts. I've been more under the weather lately than Al Roaker, so I'm still getting over it. After that, one of our contacts helped me cut the cake, but we both held the knife at the same time...it was like we were at a wedding or something. Don't worry, we have all the pictures for those of you who would like to continue in the mockery. After that, my teammates gave me a card and some gifts. They gave me a couple shirts that had the name "Gangsta" written on the front. I thought it was obvious already, but apparently I need to advertise my hip hop flava a little more. And my contacts, which are actually the daughters of our main contacts in Germany, gave me a present from their family which was two wooden carved angels. Very cool gifts. Our main contact, Roselinde, even gave me a phone call to wish me a happy birthday which was pretty darn cool too. After that, the team left, and it was me, Sune, and the host family for the rest of the evening doing a little straight chill'n. As the



Dave Hougum

rapped Ice Cube would say, "Today was a good day." Until next time, do one thing for me ya'll.....keep it real!

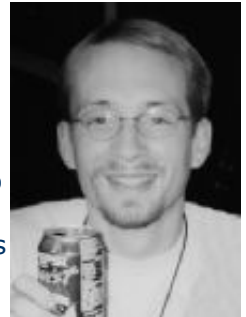
Peace and love from above,
Dave

Date: 4/5/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

I can't believe it's April already...the new month started with our departure from the greater Riesa-Kreinitz metro area after 10 days, making the whopping one-hour drive to the city of Dresden. This stop was made possible thanks to our contact Ferdi, the sound tech on last year's Captive Free Northeast team. It was great to see him again, meet his family and stay at his house. Our schedule was lighter than it's been lately, so we had a lot of time to explore Dresden, which is a beautiful and historic city besides being the capital of and largest city in the state of Sachsen (Saxony). We experienced a ministry slightly different from our norm on Friday when we visited a Christian elementary school. It was like being back on New Vision, except that the kids didn't wear uniforms or speak English with Australian accents and it wasn't 90 degrees outside. It is finally warming up, though; we've been pushing the 20 degree (68 Fahrenheit) barrier, which makes it nice for walking around. On Saturday we actually made a quick return to Riesa for part two of our Blaeserensemble adventure. This was the big one, at which we were essentially the warmup music for a 37-choir, 1000+ member choral concert at Erdgas Arena with about two or three thousand in attendance. We played before the concert proper began, then had to leave for our own concert back in Dresden, and just like that our days of what we have affectionately termed "big band karaoke" have come to an end. After our concert we got a quick tour of Dresden by night on the way back to our host home, then after the worship service the next morning it was off to Leipzig to celebrate Dave's birthday. I have the same host home in Leipzig as two years ago, so I had to relive the magic last night and watch "Ein Koenigreich fuer ein Lama," better known as "The Emperor's New Groove," in German. Ah, the memories...



Steve Ellwein

The next couple of days appear to be on the lighter side as well. Today we visited the Evangelisches Schulzentrum, a Christian high school, for one double and two single classes. In one of them we were actually teachers of sorts; instead of our normal routine of questions with a little music for the entire period, the students were in a unit on "detective fiction" (Sherlock Holmes and such). We helped with a word search of related characteristics and then moved from English to drama as the students acted out those characteristics. Definitely an interesting break from the routine. Lunch at the school ended our "work day," and we then went off for a semi-guided tour of Leipzig with Cecily and the girls' host Marcel (with whom my previous team spent a lot of time). Actually, we were only together until the Thomaskirche, famous because of a former organist by the name of Johann Sebastian Bach. After that we split off – some to attempt to figure out exactly how we're getting to Romania in just over two weeks, most for shopping and other errands. I wandered around town alone for a while, which was itself kind of nice, and added a little to my collection. I don't think they've caught on yet in the U.S., but Germany has quite a few of a car by the name of Smart. They're meant to be city cars, which is reflected in the incredible mileage they get and in the design. It's basically a front seat, the sort-of trunk common to most cars around here, and that's about it. (Because they're so small, though, despite the incredible mileage it has to be filled after about the same driving distance as a regular car because the gas tank holds about five gallons.) Two of them parked bumper to bumper take up less room than our Sprinter or our van in the U.S., so they can be parked anywhere. Since they're so unique and noticeable, a lot of businesses also put their logos on one and use it as a moving billboard. They were just being introduced two years ago, but they're a little more common now, especially in cities, and now that I'm here with a digital camera I've started a series of pictures. I don't know what it is about them, but for some reason they make me smile, and I've discovered that it's good on team and in life in general to have things that make you smile. After the Leipzig-Smart adventure it was back to the host home, where Pat and I spent a good chunk of the evening with our host family watching "Buffy." Yeah, that's right. Our host sister is a huge fan – posters all over the room, magazines and other memorabilia, and just about every

episode on tape and DVD, with the DVD part being key since that meant there was something we could watch in English. The episode we saw is one of my favorites from the ones I have seen, but it was Pat's first – I'm not sure how much sense the back story we tried to give him made or how much he enjoyed it, but it was good to spend some time with the host family and see something in English other than MTV or CNN (which we've also been watching copious amounts of while we're here).

Tomorrow is similar to today, with only one school on the schedule, and unlike our usual method the classes will come to us in the auditorium (which, unlike almost every other German school, is on the bottom floor instead of the top), then it's off to explore Leipzig again. We'll also have a long-awaited team outing – we've been eyeing a Greek restaurant a little down the road. Wednesday we're in small groups for the first time here, with my group going in the morning and the others in the afternoon, then the time will have arrived for our concert. It's the last one in Sachsen, meaning we'll probably see a lot of familiar faces – Paesslers, more Blaeserensemble guest musicians and the like – and it should be a special night. After that it's off to Berlin for Easter weekend with the American church, and then with only a week in Neumuenster and a few days in Mecklenburg to go before Romania it's time to start thinking about leaving. It's odd to think of our time in Germany as getting so close to the end, but I hope it encourages me to make the best possible use of the time we have left. Each time I have been overseas I've had regrets about not taking opportunities, not getting as close to people as I could have, not doing more. The business of an overseas schedule also makes it easy to get caught up in the routine of concerts and schools and programming and not simply to enjoy and appreciate being where I am. I love Germany and I'll miss it when the time comes to leave, but I still have a little more than two weeks before that time comes. I pray that those two-plus weeks will be a blessing to me and my entire team and that I and my entire team can continue to give as much of ourselves as we can with God's help to be a blessing to others. There isn't much time left – let's make the most of what we have before we are saying "I can't believe it's May already." – Luke 24:42 (just seeing who's paying attention)

Date: 4/7/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

April seventh the year of our Lord two thousand and four (try saying that out loud loudly with a British accent, it's kinda fun!)

Speaking of British, we were in the German schools again today! Why am I talking so much about British you ask, well I reckon you would! It's because the students here learn British English. British, the proper way, with words like "gap year", "cue", "fetch" (as in "Are you going to fetch the rest of your teammates?"), "quite right!", "straight on" (meaning drive straight ahead), and "rubber" (meaning eraser)...oh British! We love it! This week we are in Leipzig with Cecily (the daughter of our main contacts in Germany). She's so cool, she was on Watermark a couple of years ago, so she knows the ways. We had a big concert tonight, so instead of having all of us be in the schools all day and then set up for our concert and play till late, she let us go to schools in our small groups, so Kat, Steve, Dave, and I went to the early shift, then we got the afternoon off while Pat, Martha, and Sune went to classrooms in the afternoon. It was a fun day in the classrooms, we introduced ourselves and sang some songs and answered questions and invited the kids to our concert.

Then came lunch...oh boy, lunch. Sometimes the lunches in German schools are as scary as the lunches in American schools, only with different types of food. There's this thing called Klöße and we try to avoid it like the plague! It's potato dumpling balls, but they aren't ordinary, they're like bouncy and I swear if you would throw them against the wall they would bounce back like a racquetball. So here we are looking at our plates wondering where we can throw the Klöße, or if we can hide them in Kat's bag? Maybe they could go in me or Dave's guitar cases? The possibilities were endless, except that we were really really hungry because we only had bread and juice for breakfast...so we ate it. And it's not that bad when you use a lot of salt and dip it in the sauce. Just wanted to give you a little taste of lunch in the German schools...sometimes it's really good, sometimes we look for the nearest plant to bury it in and then look for a Mc Donald's on the way home. J



Cathleen Gosselin

The concert tonight was cool, tons of kids from the schools came!!! It was in this huge old church. During the concert Kat started busting out laughing, and later she told us it was cuz she realized that she was in Germany playing in a band! God's good! Sometimes it really sinks in that we're here, and it's good! We talked with tons of kids afterwards and it was a good night. I know they had fun and heard and experienced a lot of things about Jesus, the One who loves them most. What else could you want? What else do we need? Good food, good fellowship, good music, and a VERY good God!

Praise God!
Cathleen
Watermark Britain

Date: 4/9/2004

Submitted by: Kat Goglin

Journal Entry:

My eyes change colors when I cry. According to my wonderful teammate, Cathleen, they turn a bright, light, icy blue. I cried a lot today. On this Good Friday, most of the team went to see the movie, "The Passion" here in Berlin. We went to a theater that had English subtitles, so that was a blessing. We then helped with a Good Friday service here at the American church in Berlin and it was amazing. God spoke so much to me, I was very thankful that the service was in English. But I feel this need right now to just cry out to God. I can't explain it, but I just want to spend time in His presence. His love for us is so deep and real, it is beyond comprehension. "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." I John 4:9-10 God is good!



Kat Goglin

Date: 4/10/2004

Submitted by: Martha Mitkos

Journal Entry:

Dear Friends in Christ,

Yesterday was Good Friday. We have been so busy here in Germany that the Lenten season has just flown by with little acknowledgement, on my part, as to its significance and meaning. Ash Wednesday came and went without ashes sprinkled on my forehead. Palm Sunday came and went without a single palm branch waved. We have these memories and traditions that we remember from as far back as our childhood that help us prepare our hearts for Christ's death and resurrection. I have been spending every free moment I have delving deep into the scriptures and reading about God's power and the Laws that he has laid forth for us. The problem is I have been so fixated on reading the Old Testament I almost missed the most amazing gift that has been given to us all in the New Testament: The gift of Christ's everlasting love and sacrifice for us on the cross at Calvary. It has truly been a blessing to be here in Berlin and hear sermons spoken in our own language without having to think really hard and seek for the meaning of words. Thursday night's Maundy Thursday service gave me a much greater appreciation for hearing the word spoken in our own language.

But yesterday on Good Friday, the day in which Christ was betrayed, I sat in a darkened movie theatre with five people that God has given me this entire year to serve and love, weeping uncontrollably. As I am sure a lot of you have already guessed we spent the afternoon watching Mel Gibson's The Passion. I can't even begin to express in words the feelings of sadness, guilt, anger, and sheer joy that overwhelmed me. I have heard the story of the Passion throughout my life. I have read the scriptures. I have tried to understand and visualize what it was like. But because of my own fears of these images I have not allowed myself to picture the torture or Christ for what it really was. I am glad that Mel Gibson was able to do that for me. I found myself in shock at the



Martha Mitkos

realization of the brutality that Christ suffered, the love and compassion that he showed everyone even in the midst of his pain and suffering, and sitting there I felt that I was the only person in the room and that Christ had suffered for me and my sins so that I may have everlasting life. I found myself wanting to turn away and not watch but then I told myself that if Christ can suffer like this for my sins, then I can at least watch his suffering and gain a better understanding of what it really means to lay down your life for your friends. All of the scenes of Christ's life that flashed on the screen, washing his disciples feet, sharing the last supper with them, dying for us all, and his resurrection left me in tears. No matter how hard we try, we are sinful beings and all fall short of the glory of God. We can not redeem ourselves. The only redeeming factor is God's grace and Christ's blood that was shed for all of us. And even though I left the theatre drained and still weeping the rest of the day, I can take comfort in knowing that Christ is my own personal Lord and Savior. He died to set me free from my sins and give me everlasting life. What an amazing and unbelievable gift! Guess what, Christ died for you too! All he wants is to be your Savior and show you the same love that he has shown me.

There is a song that we sing quite frequently called "Beautiful Scandalous Night". I have always loved this song because it talks about Christ's death and while it was a scandalous night when Christ, an innocent man, was crucified on a cross it was also a very beautiful night because God gave his only son to die for us so that we would be freed. Can you imagine the sacrifice God made? As we sang the words of the song at the Good Friday worship the images from the movies along with the words melded in my head and I again began to cry.

But we also have to remember...weeping may come for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. Can you imagine that Easter morning a little over 2,000 years ago when Christ rose from the dead and fulfilled God's promise to us? Sunday morning at the American Church in Berlin was full of rejoicing. Six people received the sacrament of Holy Baptism, I received the sacrament of Holy Communion from the American Ambassador to Germany, and we sang praises to God for the amazing gift of his son!

We spend a lot of time here at Youth Encounter talking about the importance of the Global Church. Sunday morning as I looked out into the congregation and saw people from 30 different countries, all of different races and different backgrounds, worshiping and praising God as one body in Christ my heart was overwhelmed with joy! Praise God!

In His Service,
Martha J. Mitkos
WMGCR2

Date: 4/12/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:

I think I'm probably a city person, but I haven't always been that way. We spent Easter weekend in Berlin, the capital of and largest city in Germany, working with the American Church in Berlin. The name is a little misleading – although the pastor and a healthy percentage of the membership are American and it's an English-speaking church, about 30 nations are represented in the congregation. We basically spent the Easter holidays with them, arriving on Maundy Thursday to attend a service, contributing some music to the Good Friday Tenebrae service, hanging out with the youth group on Saturday night and doing some songs and our puppet show (in English – feels like old times) on Sunday morning. With our host homes in the southwest part of the city and the church more in the middle, we've been using Berlin's train system quite a bit, which is actually pretty well organized and made for a little fun when we had an impromptu concert on the train when we brought our instruments to the church for Friday's service. Even though I love the fact that my German has been improving as I've used it over the last two-plus months, and the German people are wonderful, it's still refreshing to spend time with some Americans (and others) and do ministry entirely in English for a few days. Besides that, the relative lightness of our schedule has given us opportunities to do other things in this time. If you've read the last few journals you know our reactions to "The Passion," which was particularly meaningful to see on Good Friday, even



Steve Ellwein

if we were still a little dazed/shell-shocked/emotionally spent for the service. Friday and Saturday also gave us some good time for sightseeing, mostly in the areas of the Gedachtniskirche (an old church bombed by the Allies during World War II – the original was left as a memorial and a new building was put up), the Sony Center (where we saw the movie), the Brandenburger Tor (Brandenburg Gate) and Checkpoint Charlie (which has a great museum of the history of the Berlin Wall). Then, of course, there was Easter.

Since it was also Pat's birthday, we started with a quick celebration of that before heading off to church, then we split into four different families for Easter dinner. Dave and I went to the home of one of the church members who was a professional opera singer. It was quite a party, with about 15-20 friends there. Most of them were also opera singers or in some way involved in the arts, and it was a regular United Nations of Easter with people from the United States, Canada, Germany, England, Ireland and Greece in attendance. After the meal, though, is when things got really interesting. We had brought our instruments (Dave's guitar, my mandolin), and they wanted us to do a song. One song turned into three, and one we ended up doing (with two out of the seven of us, keep in mind) Dave couldn't sing because he was playing piano. So there I was, singing a solo in front of a bunch of professional opera singers from six countries. It sounds like the beginning of a joke, but it's true. If you had told me three years or even three days ago that this would be happening I wouldn't have believed it, but that's how God works sometimes. After the dinner I had a terrific solo walk around Berlin at night from Checkpoint Charlie over to the Reichstag (Parliament building), and so went my Easter.

Today was supposed to be our long drive across most of the country from Berlin to Neumuenster. We were told it would take six or seven hours, so we were very pleasantly surprised when we were on our final approach four hours after leaving. We had no idea what to do with ourselves, being so early and all, but then we had an idea. See, Neumuenster is in the very northwest part of Germany in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, about an hour from the Danish border. We had been hoping to get to Denmark this week anyway, so we decided to go a little early and pay a visit to the Beck farm just outside the southern Jylland town of Gram. Sune's family was thrilled to see us (mostly him, but us too), but unfortunately our visit was all too short as we got a little turned around getting to his house. We ended up getting back to Neumuenster a little late, but the youth group there is incredible and very gracious, so we simply proceeded right into the planned pizza supper with our host families and members of the youth group with which we will be working this week. It's an interesting program with a little variety from what has been normal for us – tomorrow we have a few confirmation meetings, then a homeless outreach center called Cafe Jersualem, the regular youth group meeting, and we do go to a school but we'll be doing a theater workshop there. We'll also visit an after-school program called @home and do a little bit of singing on the streets to promote our Friday evening concert.

Before the age of 11, I lived in a town of about 900 people. I loved it, and I couldn't think of anywhere else I would rather have been. We visited Sioux Falls almost every weekend since my grandparents were there, but it seemed like just that – a place to visit. Then we moved there and my community of 900 became 120,000 (now around 130,000). Suddenly I became a lot more comfortable in cities, a trend which continued as I started making visits to places like Chicago, Washington, DC, Anaheim and New York in high school and being only an hour away from Minneapolis-St. Paul in college. The end result is that I still love small towns but I think I've become a city person – the first part of the tour was terrific and I like the coziness and family atmosphere of the smaller communities we've been to, but I've felt the life and character coming from our most recent stops of Dresden, Leipzig and now the big city (a little more than three million) of Berlin. Basically, I'm comfortable with what I'm familiar with, something which applies to the places we visit as well. Neumuenster was the second stop of my first tour of Germany, and they have an active youth group that's a lot of fun to be around – we had a great time and I remembered a fair number of the people when we arrived today. I was instantly comfortable once we got to the church and I'm really looking forward to this week. I'm not saying that we should never step outside of our comfort zones – most of the time, like me and cities, that's what makes things become familiar to us. Sometimes, though, it's good to have something familiar around; it recharges us and makes us better able to continue on in this ministry. I'm glad that I'm getting some of that this week. – 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Date: 4/14/2004
Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin
Journal Entry:



Cathleen Gosselin

April 14th, 2004

Today was a very special day because it was Martha's birthday!!! It was also a special day because we got to play a morning concert at a very cool place called Café Jerusalem. Café Jerusalem is a place for people without a job to come and have some work and also become part of a community that builds each other up. We played a good concert and it was fun to talk about this year and the ways that God's provided for us and how we have all grown to trust Him more through this! It was like this coffee house/hang out place: smoky, chairs and tables around, and counter to get drinks at. We didn't know any of this going into it, but after our concert the main leader guy said that he's like to share some things with us about the place we had just played at, and we were blown away! After I picked my jaw up off the floor I translated for my team that the leader felt like this place was a lot like team. They come there together not only to work there, but also to build a community together. They talk together and build back the trust that had been broken over and over in these people's lives. They meet together and do devotions, and are introduced to the love of Christ. It was so cool, I was totally humbled by their perseverance and desire to change their lives...it encouraged us in the last weeks of our European tour when we're getting tired and discouraged. People who had no job, many of who struggled with alcohol, and who had families possibly more broken than our own were letting their lives be changed and made whole by Christ. It was a beautiful thing!

Then for the afternoon, Pat pretended to schedule 1-on-1's for team time in the afternoon, but by "team time", we really meant "time to surprise Martha". So when she and Pat went off for their "1-on-1" the rest of the team went to buy Martha presents and a Doener (a Turkish lamb sandwich on warm bread with this awesome sauce!) which she loves! Then we ambushed Pat and her at the park and sang "Happy Birthday" to her really loud and gave her her Doener. Then she was like "oh you guys...when do we start our next 1-on-1?" And then we were like "no Martha, we don't really have 1-on-1's, it was just a trick so we could surprise you, this afternoon is just to hang out together with you for your birthday", and she was like "no guys really, when does the next 1-on-1 start?" So we just took her out for Italian ice cream and spend the rest of the afternoon together walking around the park, it was really nice. It was a good day! God's good!

Cathleen :)
Watermark Italy and Turkey

Date: 4/19/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

Sometimes, even when you know the way, you just have to stop and ask for directions. We wrapped up our time in Neumuenster and therefore in the former West Germany today, but it's been a great week. On Thursday, after our time at @home (the after-school program where we played outside and I made our first attempt in a while at an interactive Bible story), we piled into the van and headed north. As we drove we made signs and as we neared our destination we bought some flags, and finally (after a couple of flybys to make sure we weren't too early) we arrived. With all the stealth we could muster we got out of the van, approached the little church in Stenderup, Denmark and stormed inside just as Watermark Denmark was finishing their first song. The looks on their faces made the entire trip worth it, not to mention that we got to see a great program without leading it, spend some time with our friends of the "other" Watermark and experience some authentic Danish hygge (takes too long and is hard to fully explain, so let's say fellowship time). The layout of the church and the semi-structure of what happened after the program brought back some great memories for me as well about simply being on team in Denmark. Of course, we then had to drive back, with stops in Kolding to get food at McDonald's (interesting for everyone to experience it in another country, weird to hear Sune order in English?!) and a Tankstelle (filling station) off the

Autobahn about 10 km after we realized our tank was in the red and started praying (good thing prayer works, because it must have been the only thing we saw for a half hour). Even though it was a late night it was a great time and one of the highlights of the week.

Of course, the day after that we had our own program in Neumuenster. Lots of people from the Landeskirche Gemeinschaft (the church that was our base for the week), some from the Lutherkirche (where we had our confirmation meetings on Tuesday), some from the school we visited – unfortunately not many from "outside" after our 3-4 hours total of singing on the streets, but that's how it goes sometimes. Saturday was our day off and we scattered – some back to different points in Denmark, the rest an hour south to Hamburg. Pat and I spent the entire day walking around from the Hauptbahnhof (main train station) and surrounding shops to the St. Michael's church, climbing the 453 steps down from the tower overlooking the entire city after the wait for the elevator up was too long, to the harbor area and back. It was our last day off in Germany and we used it to the fullest. Yesterday we had two worship services – one in the morning at the Lutherkirche and one in the afternoon back at "our" church. I think there were more people at the afternoon service than at the concert, which made for a great end to our time. My host from two years ago was there; he travels a lot in his job and so was unable to be at the concert, but that was also a bonus because he was a great help as I continue to attempt to complete my Euro coin collection (75 down, 21 to go if I don't try for the really rare ones). Some of the participants in the @home program were also there along with some of the Pais team members who help at the center – it's like a team only more long-term and without music, and the members come from England, Ireland and Germany – and a few of us went out for ice cream with them after the service and farewell supper.

Today brought some of the clear signs that our time in Germany is coming to an end. In the morning we "made our last shoppings," as they say, and after lunch (which for a few of us was in a doener shop being serenaded by the Turkish version of MTV) it was off to our last station in Germany. Klaber is a small town – it doesn't appear on any maps and we got confused looks whenever we told people that's where we were going, perhaps because when the seven of us arrived it pushed the population up to 100 – and it is located in the northeastern state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which is kind of the German North Dakota in terms of flatness and sparseness of population (no offense – both states are lovely). It is in our huge atlas, however, and our atlas is old so the Autobahn that was only planned when it was written is now finished for most of the way across northern Germany, so it should have been no problem to get there – just get to Luebeck and hop on the A20, and the rest of the way is easy. Well, Luebeck was indeed no problem, but once we got into the city things got a little interesting. We passed three Autobahn entrances, but nothing like what we were looking for. I saw something that might have been right, but it wasn't exactly what we were looking for so we bypassed it. About the time we came to realize we might be driving in a circle we decided it was time to visit "the people who know everything," a.k.a. a gas station attendant. The way to A20 (which was a little outside of Luebeck) was a little complicated, which made me feel a little better, but once we had the directions we just followed them (including the point that I thought might have been right) and it was fine; once we got on A20 we used a combination of our atlas and my memory to find first Klaber and then the pastor's house. After some quick cake & tea (since we arrived about two hours after we thought we would due to our side trip and another infamous Autobahn traffic jam) it was off to the host homes, our last in Germany, and here we are.

Tomorrow is booked – we have our penultimate (second-to-last for those who like new vocabulary words) school, a hangout time in the parking lot in nearby Langhagen, and between that a few of us will go to a children's time meeting that is expected to have about 5-10 kids there. The next day brings our last German school and our last German concert in Serrahn, and in the middle of this we are preparing to go to Romania and essentially back to the U.S. since we won't have much time to shift bags or make things airport ready when we come through after Romania. It's kind of like our journey here to Klaber – we know where we need to go and we have a pretty good idea of how to get there, but we can't make the entire journey by ourselves. There comes a point when we have to realize that not every step is within our knowledge or control and we need to ask for help. It's a humbling thing, but it's also freeing in a way because it means it doesn't depend on us. God is ready to show us the way and help us along the path through all the surprises and unexpected turns, something that we will need as we head into the unknown of ministry in Romania. It's an exciting time for us – I'm looking forward to a new country and what awaits us there and I'm also looking forward to leaning on God and seeing what He has in store for us. – Psalm 18:6

"There are things we know we know. These are the known knowns. There are also things we know we don't know. These are the known unknowns. But then there are the things we don't know we don't know – the unknown unknowns." – Donald Rumsfeld (paraphrased)

Date: 4/21/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

April 21st, 2004

Today is our last day in Germany! Dang, the time has gone fast!!! It hasn't really sunk in though that we're going to ROMANIA TOMORROW! My goodness! J I'm super excited, some nervousness in the team, because we don't really know Romanian or Hungarian (the language used in the church we're going to be a part of) and because Romania is going to be very different than anything we've experienced so far...but I'm just excited!!! We get to go to Romania!!! Woo-hoo!



Cathleen Gosselin

Today was a crazy day. Our contacts in Klaber (our last German town: population 93, founded a lot earlier than Columbus discover the Americas, cuter than you could ever imagine!) have had us booked full these last 3 days in Germany, and we also have all of our preparations for Romania to do on top of normal school visits, concerts and random hanging out with German youth in a parking lot by the city's bus stop. This morning we split up into 2 groups to divide up the work, so some could go play music and talk with kids, while others could pack and do all the last minute things of finishing up in Germany and getting ready to go to Romania. It was a crazy busy day!!! Most of us didn't go to bed till really late last night, cuz we were packing and today we were just going all day. Thankfully it was a beautiful spring day and we took random little breaks to lay out in the sun on the beautiful grass and in the spring flowers, pretending we were in the Alps, and not to mention the sheep grazing by us! J It was kinda humorous, but we were running around too much to really notice it! J

Tonight we played our last concert in Germany and it was awesome, it was packed with people and I don't really know where they all came from, but somehow a bunch of people were packing this old church wanting to hear some music and some word from God. My host sister made a huge banner (like 6' by 4') and hung it from the balcony of the church. After the concert we had to pack up really fast because tonight we had to drive 5 hours to Riesa, Germany to the Passler's house, where we would sleep there for a couple hours and then take a train to Frankfurt to take a plane to Cluj, Romania, to meet our Romanian contact and start a new adventure!

God's good...He took care of us well in Germany and it was a ton of fun! I know He's gonna do ever more in Romania! I'm excited. Soon and very soon we will be in western Romania, near the mountains, eating some new surprise of a food and working with the Hungarian church of Romania! Woo-hoo! I'm excited to see what it's like and to enjoy our last 10 days in Europe.

Cathleen J

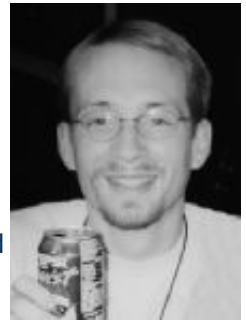
Date: 4/26/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Sometimes you just have to dive in...we have arrived safely in Romania and are having the time of our lives with the Hungarians. How does that work? Well, we are in the Transylvania region of Romania (no sign of Dracula yet), which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (former home of the Farkases, a.k.a. Mom's side of the family) until World War I, when it became part of Romania. The Hungarians that didn't succumb to

the Romanian government's strong encouragements to move to Hungary preserved their culture and language, and so it was that we received an invitation to minister in Romania with Christian Endeavour and the Hungarian Reformed (Reformed = Calvinist = Presbyterian) Church. The first adventure was getting there; we drove from our last program in Serrahn, Germany to the Paesslers' house in Kreinitz, arriving at around 1:30 a.m. After a few hours of sleep, we had breakfast, did what repacking we hadn't done the night before and somehow made our train in Riesa despite leaving Kreinitz 10 minutes before the train was scheduled to depart. We switched trains in Dresden, ended up most of the way across the country to the west in Frankfurt, and boarded a plane to fly southeast to Romania. Yeah, it didn't make much sense to us either. At any rate, it was fairly late when we arrived in Cluj Napoca in northern Romania to be greeted by Peter (one of the pastors of a congregation in town) and Judit (one of our contacts in Cluj Napoca and an organizer of the conference we'll be at to end this week). We were worn out from what was basically over 24 hours of travel with a few hours' break preceded by some fairly packed days to end our time in Germany, and we still had no real idea of what to expect in Romania, so seeing Peter and Judit was a real blessing to us; very welcoming, very understanding, very open to us.



Steve Ellwein

With only about 10 days in Romania after all the rearranging of travel schedules, it came as something of a surprise to us that Friday and Saturday were fairly light. On Friday we were given a tour of Cluj Napoca, starting (for the guys, at least) with the mall, the exchange office (we're millionaires; with an exchange rate of 33,700 Romanian lei to the dollar, \$40 is well into seven-digit territory) and our introduction to Romanian fast food. After meeting the girls and our contacts, it was off to the botanical gardens, then through the city center and to a soldiers' monument on a hill overlooking the city. All very beautiful and scenic, but there's another side to it. In Cluj Napoca, like nowhere else in Romania, the Romanian flag is everywhere. To ridiculous levels, one could say. Not only do flags line almost every main street and adorn almost every public square, many businesses and all government buildings, but in some places even flagpoles and park benches are painted Romanian blue, yellow and red. It looks quaint and wonderfully cultural at first, but even on our first night here I got the sense that something wasn't quite right. Turns out that the mayor of Cluj Napoca, now in his second term, is something of a strong Romanian nationalist, and he ordered the flags and painting and such (using city funds) as a not-so-subtle slap to the city's fairly significant (about 20 percent) Hungarian minority. In fact, the strongest concentration of it is in the square containing a statue of a former Hungarian king, making it impossible to look at or take a picture of the statue without getting a big dose of Romanian colors. Remember, while in Romania we are joining in ministry with the Hungarians. Yikes. Needless to say, the little Romanian flag I brought with me to fly from my sound board will not be making an appearance. Things aren't always as they seem from the outside; you never know until you're there living it.

The weekend brought us our first experience with ministry here. On Saturday we were invited by the youth group (more our age, as seems to be standard in European youth groups we've seen so far) to a cookout and all-afternoon picnic in a hilly area just outside of town. Depending on the team member, we spent the day laying in the sun or talking, playing games and tossing a Frisbee with our hosts. The truly strange part came just as we were packing up to leave. It was a popular area; nice view of the mountains, spots arranged across the space for fires, plenty of other groups there; so we figured it was a park of some sort. Suddenly, out of a nearby grove of trees we started seeing sheep. Then, we saw more sheep. Following that, even more sheep. Eventually shepherds (dressed in what we would consider traditional shepherd clothing) started appearing, and yet the sheep kept coming. Easily a few hundred sheep came out of the forest, and they literally overran the group that was right there. Fortunately, we were on a different hill and could simply witness the whole thing as sheep and shepherds headed down the hill and past the creek, overrunning two more groups in the process. It was the fastest packing of blankets and food I've seen in a while. It was a very surreal experience and one of the strongest "you'd-never-see-this-in-the-U.S." moments we've had. Yesterday was a little less animal-filled; in the morning we attended worship at Peter's church, got introduced to the congregation and played a couple of songs. The service, of course, was in Hungarian, so we were brought wireless headphones (the big, clunky, professional kind) over which we were to receive a translation of just about everything. Looking around at all of us in our headphones, it sort of felt like we were at the United Nations. Unfortunately, our U.N. headphones stopped working partway through the service, so our contacts hastily arranged to have people sitting around us translate. We had some time off in the afternoon, then it was time for our first Hungarian program in Romania. Situation of the day: the owner of the system we're using wanted

to run it, so basically instead of being the sound tech I either pretended that the mandolin naturally fit in or sat idly by on songs I'm not normally up front for. After last night we'll see how that continues to work, but everyone seemed to enjoy the program.

Today was our first real travel day; we're only in three cities in our time in Romania and today we moved from the first to the second. After saying a temporary goodbye to our new friends in Cluj Napoca (we'll see most of them again at the conference this weekend) we were off to Targu Mures. This city has a larger Hungarian population; closer to 50%; and we'll be spending most of the week here. We arrived in time for lunch at the Dorcas house, a home for abandoned or orphaned children from 5 to 17 years old founded by Dutch missionaries and operated by Christian Endeavour.

"Playing a few songs" turned into a nearly hour-long program, but most of the kids were into it, so it was still fun for us. We had a little time to settle into our rooms at the CE house (the headquarters of the Hungarian Romanians' Christian Endeavor), then a few of us met with a Hungarian praise band that will basically be opening for us at our two outdoor concerts later on this week. One more meeting for the day, this one with many of the CE leaders and organizers of the upcoming conference. We didn't know a lot about our time in Romania before we came; we had only been in contact with a few of the leaders, and not for very long; but they are amazing people who are very dedicated to the work to which God has called them here. We'll meet more of them tomorrow night when we attend the Philothea Bible study group after some sightseeing at a Hungarian market and a canyon resembling the one in which "Cold Mountain" was filmed (it was filmed in Romania), and we will meet still more of them at the conference. That's the thing, I guess...all the information, all the things you hear and read about a place or a situation, might be right on or it might be completely wrong. You just don't know until you are there experiencing it. The first few days have been great, and there's still a week to go; I can't wait to dive in and experience the rest. Matthew 25:35

Date: 4/28/2004

Submitted by: Cathleen Gosselin

Journal Entry:

J'napot! (that means "Good day" in Hungarian)

Why are you speaking Hungarian, you ask? I thought you were in Romania? Well, I tell you that as we've come to learn, there is a huge Hungarian minority in Romania, so much that sometimes cities are like 30% or 40% Hungarian (it's the truth!). The Christian organization (Christian Endeavor) that we are working with is actually Hungarian so, igen (yes), we're hanging out with the Hungarians in Romania! Cool, huh?



Cathleen Gosselin

Today was our first day of visiting schools in Romania, and you guessed it, it wasn't a Romanian school, it was Hungarian! We were excited to make a good first impression and to take everything we've learned from being in the schools almost every day in Germany, and to bless the socks off of our Romanian (Hungarian) friends even though we are only here for a week. So we get to the school and it's huge and old and beautiful and it had a courtyard! The school had a lot of history and was very well-known, and for the first class the principal took us around for a tour of the school. (Turns out Steve is Hungarian and one of the most famous founder/teacher guys at this old school has his mom's maiden name! Go Farkas!). After the tour, came our first classroom visit...what would it be like? When we got to our class the principal said that the teacher wouldn't stay because she didn't want her students to feel nervous about speaking English around her...ok, we can handle that. Then the principal said that he wouldn't be there...all right, so then it was just us and our 3 Hungarian friends from CE. Kinda weird, but ok, we could do it. Then our 3 Hungarian friends said that they were going to go and pick us up in a couple of hours!!! What?!?!? Can we please have a translator for our first Hungarian school?!?!? For the love! So we're standing in front of this classroom of Hungarian kids and we're like..."uhhh...good morning?"...turns out they all speak like perfect English because they start learning English in 2nd grade! Fears relieved! It was an awesome class and we had tons of fun with the kids! They loved the music too and kept asking us to play more.

That evening we had an outdoor concert in the school courtyard. The forecast was for clouds and rain, but the Hungarians prayed and it was a beautiful sunny warm spring evening for the concert!

God's cool like that! We were up on a stage and a couple hundred of people were hanging out in the courtyard listening to the music, and a bunch were up front by the stage too. It was fun! A Hungarian band from CE opened for us with a couple songs they wrote in Hungarian, and their music was so cool. They had violin, guitars, recorder and vocals and the music was so peaceful and beautiful and worshipful, I liked it a lot! They also came up and sang Lord I Lift Your Name on High with us in Hungarian...very cool! It made me think about heaven and what it will be like when every nation and every tongue are worshiping Jesus before His throne! J I like when we get to experience a little bit of that on earth. God's good!

Cathleen
Watermark Hungary

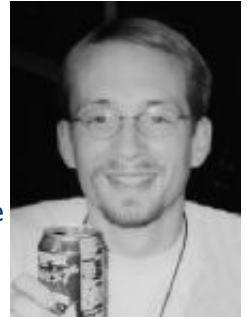
Date: 5/4/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

It all seems like a blur...no, not the last four months (although that's sometimes also true), but the last three days spent in four different countries, kind of a speeded-up version of our tour in reverse. Our last few days in Romania were every bit as fun as the first, starting with trips to two schools in Targu Mures on Wednesday and Thursday; at the first we sang out in the courtyard between classes and at the second we had a "classroom visit" outside. If we haven't said anything on the subject yet, we are a bit further south than we were in Germany; closer to the Mediterranean; and it is, of course, farther into spring, so instead of the high teens (mid-60s for those in the U.S.) we were used to we now average in the mid-high 20s (high 70s or just over 80) in the daytime, which by comparison is downright warm and a lot nicer to deal with. We also had outdoor programs both nights, the first at the school and the second at the local citadel-turned-museum, both with opening songs by and collaborations with the Hungarian band we met last week. Our time in Targu Mures ended with some late-night pizza, then on Friday we had one more move to Zalau. This was the long drive; we had to drive through Cluj Napoca to get there and it took the better part of the day; but we arrived in plenty of time for the one thing we knew with certainty would be coming in Romania. Each year Christian Endeavour hosts a conference attended by Hungarian youth from across Romania, and this year we were Friday night's main attraction. (We were supposed to have spent a couple more days there, doing workshops and the like, but the craziness of our travel plans meant we had to cut our time short.) We did a program for 500-600 people, and it was a great experience. For one night we rose above the tiredness--of fatigue, of songs, of puppets, of whatever it is--and had one of the best programs we've had in a while. The theme of the conference roughly translates to "alone it doesn't work," and while the conference itself is a little more relationship-focused it has taken on a couple of other meanings for us. One, that we work better together as a team than as seven individuals; two, that it doesn't work at all unless God is guiding us and we are relying on Him. Both of those things came through Friday night to make a strong end to the programming portion of our overseas ministry.

After all the goodbyes and tributes and celebrations of Sune's birthday, Saturday began our blurry, country-hopping journey out of Europe. On Saturday morning we drove from Zalau back to Cluj Napoca to check in for our flight. The process of checking in actually took longer than finding the gate, given that the lobby is the terminal is the waiting area for the two gates (one for domestic flights, one for international). Our two-propellor Tarom AR-42-500 got us back to Frankfurt without any trouble, then we got a surprise by our German contact Cecily. We had thought we would need to rush from the airport to the train station to catch a train from Frankfurt to Riesa, but Cecily met us to drive us all the way (across most of the country, really) back to Kreinitz, so we said goodbye to Dave (who left from Frankfurt for his vacation) and took off in the Mercedes Sprinter that formerly belonged to Watermark Denmark (thanks, guys). It was a nice review of parts of our German tour; past Eisenach and Wartburg Castle, past Gotha and Jena, past Leipzig, and eventually we were back in Kreinitz for one more night at the Paesslers'. Not a lot of time to celebrate, though; fortunately we had done most of our "airport-ready" packing before going to Romania, but we had to pick up and reorganize everything we had left in Germany, then say goodbye to the Paesslers, take one last Sprinter ride into Riesa, say goodbye to Sune and catch a train back to Prague. Now, we didn't



Steve Ellwein

exactly know what was coming next; our travel plans weren't really established before we left and this circuitous route was the best we could cobble together in the last few weeks. One thing that slipped by us was exactly what we would be doing in Prague last night. So, after finding basically nothing at the stop our train arrived at (not the main one as we had thought), we loaded ourselves up and took the metro toward the museum, which is a rather central area of town for tourists and which we hoped would give us some options. Martha, Pat and I stayed with our collective mountain of luggage in the train station we arrived at and Cathleen and Kat went off in search of hotels. Ten minutes went by...twenty...thirty...it was almost an hour before they got back, but somehow they had managed to find a hotel right on the main strip running from the museum down toward the Old City, and it was cheaper than the seminary we had stayed at on our previous trips to Prague. So, we checked in, got supper, then some people went back to the hotel to start sleeping and some went exploring. I went breakfast shopping with Martha, then set off by myself to walk around and ended up heading for the Vltava River (in Germany it's the Moldau) and past the National Theater, where flags of the Czech Republic and the European Union were flying celebrating the country's May 1 entry (along with nine other nations) into the EU. A short walk along the river brings you to the Karluv Most (Charles Bridge), the famous bridge with statues lining it on both sides and the best way to go to continue up the hill to the castle and St. Vitus Cathedral. I ended up spending about three hours on the bridge, watching people, taking pictures and watching the sun go down. The sunset wasn't as spectacular as I had hoped, but I still got some good shots and had a very relaxing last night in Europe. Somehow I bumped into Pat on the way back, and together we went back to the town square for some last-minute souvenir shopping and eventually got back to the hotel.

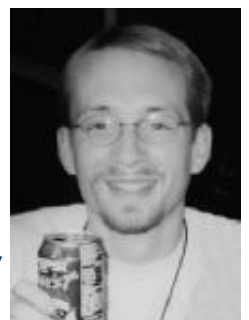
Morning came early; our airport shuttle left at 4:45 a.m., so I was up before 4:00. We said goodbye to Cathleen and the remaining four Watermark members made our way to the airport for the flight to London, then on to New York. I don't know how I stayed on the sleep schedule I set out for myself, but somehow it worked (some good movies and a big shot of God's watchfulness surely helped). Probably the most welcome sight I've seen in a while was our New York contacts the Fyfes waiting for us after we went through customs, baggage claim and the like. We said goodbye to Kat (whose parents were also waiting for us), went to lunch (or whatever meal it felt like with where our bodies were at, but the clock said lunch), back to the airport to drop off Martha and Pat, and now it's down to just me and the Fyfes. I'm staying in New York tonight, and tomorrow is my fourth straight travel day as I complete the journey back to Sioux Falls to begin my vacation. If it had been up to me I would have stayed in Europe for the week (unfortunately that choice was not given to us this time), but I do miss my family and it will be good to be home for a while; I'll probably make a side trip to the Twin Cities to see some friends as well. It seems really strange to be talking about all this stuff in the United States again, but we're back. Next Monday our vacation ends, we gather back in New York, and it will be time for our return preparation days to have some team meetings and figure out how we'll be presenting this experience in the context of our return tour program. There's no way to tell everything; there's never enough time or attention span or words or common context or any of a host of other things. As usual, the overseas tour has been a wonderful, life-changing experience. Many thanks and God's richest blessings once again to the leaders of the Lutheran Church of Silesia in the Czech Republic, the Paessler family and all of our regional contacts in Germany, the leaders of Christian Endeavour and the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania, and all of the wonderful people who were such a big part of the last four months of our lives and will continue to be through communication and memory now that thousands of miles once again separate us. I hope to keep sharing about our time overseas--specific people, places, incidents--as these journals continue from our return tour in the United States. For now, though, even as I enjoy being home I'm taking some time to enjoy getting lost in the blur. 1 Chronicles 16:8-13, 43

Date: 5/17/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Back to the old grind in a new way...after scattering for vacation, we gathered back in New York last Monday (a little later for some, thanks to a storm over the Great Lakes that resulted in a really late-night airport run) to begin our return prep. These are five days given to us to do a lot of the things we need to do to plan our return tour program, get some errands done and simply to get back to being in the United States again. We also have a staff person with us for these days to help us process the overseas



experience, see where we are at as a team and what we need to do to keep growing and improving as the year continues. So, a lot of our return prep days were spent with Sunitha, the director of Youth Encounter's international teams. We had a lot of meetings and a lot of good discussions, but also a little time to unwind, first with a trip into Manhattan (we were on Long Island) for dinner at the Hard Rock Café, then last Saturday with our hosts for Vanessa's birthday party. It's become an annual tradition (three years now); her birthday isn't technically until this week, but the party is early so Watermark can be there. This time, we added to the early birthday celebration with a late celebration for Sune. We had our first program in Baldwin (not bad for as little time as it felt like we had to prepare for it) and Sunday worship as well. There isn't really much I can say about Baldwin and what our time there has meant to us that would do it justice. It's a great place with incredible people, and I'm honored to have been part of the experience for two of three years that they have served as a prep church for international teams. Again, thank you so much for everything you've done; I think this fifth time might have been my last visit as a teamer, but I sincerely hope and believe that it's not the last time we'll see each other.

Steve Ellwein

Eventually the time to leave New York did come, and we said our goodbyes yesterday. Because we can't go on parkways with the trailer, it's always an interesting drive out of Long Island; we actually have to go north on the Van Wyck Expressway a little bit before heading west on the Long Island Expressway and then getting onto the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. The BQE is notorious for bad traffic, especially since some of the construction is still happening two years after my first visit, but it also takes you right by the Brooklyn Bridge and gives about the best view we saw of the Statue of Liberty. A bit more driving takes you to the Verrazano Narrows Bridge to Staten Island, our third borough of the day, then the New Jersey Turnpike took us through...well, New Jersey...and into Maryland. We stopped in Fork, just north of Baltimore, for the first "on the road" program. Big blessing: my aunt and uncle live in the area, and I saw them for the first time in about five years when they came to the program. Even though they couldn't stay long, it was great to have a little bit of time with them and have them see what I've been doing for the last three years. Housing for last night, tonight and tomorrow is, as has become our custom, at one of our many homes away from home; with the Torbit family, another family that has been good to us beyond what words can express. Today we toured Baltimore's Inner Harbor, with some ending up at the Cheesecake Factory for dinner and those who didn't want to wait going to the nearby ESPNZone restaurant. We stay in Maryland for one more day, with a chapel at Pat's sister's school in the morning and an evening trip of just over an hour to Wilmington, Delaware to surprise Cross Fire at their program. Starting Wednesday, the Great Western March begins--a trip that will have us in Minneapolis by the end of this week and in western Oregon just over a week after that. Back to our region, back to business.

This first part of the return tour is always interesting; it's a time when we're trying to figure out what we want our return tour program to look like, what we want our message to be, how we convey our time overseas and the people we met, etc. However, it's also a time of readjusting to simply being back in the U.S. We're not doing six classroom visits, a youth group and an evening program in one day anymore. We have a little bit more of an idea of where we're going, what we'll be doing and all of that. That's both good and bad. Knowing a little more of what lies ahead gives us more time to prepare for things, but it also gives us more time to worry about them. So far we've been doing a decent job of sticking more to the former, and I hope that continues. We're back to a place where people understand our words when we talk, but we still have to think just as much about what to say so our message is understood. With a busier overseas schedule we had to simply be in the moment a lot of the time, doing what we do in terms of programs, schools, being with people, etc. Now that we're back to long van rides and (once we get back to the Northwest) nights of housing without a program, we'll be in each other's presence having to deal with each other a lot more. We're nearing the time of year when people start getting tired of team and team relationships, but hopefully instead of that happening we'll use the time to further deepen our relationships with each other. Summer opens up opportunities for different ministry events--evenings out, camps, Vacation Bible Schools and more--and we'll have to be thinking about those in addition to our "normal" program. We're back to our own culture (or, in Sune's case, the one he's spent the most time in over the past nine months), now with a greater awareness of what's better, worse or just different and trying to readjust while holding onto what we learned in the Czech Republic, Germany and Romania. We're back to our old routine, all right, but it's a whole new ball game. We have three months to make this new part of our tour the best it can be. With God's help, I pray that we will. 1 Corinthians 2:9-12

Date: 5/21/2004
Submitted by: Kat Goglin
Journal Entry:

Dear Watermark/Germany Readers: Due to a mail packet that was lost on the way to the States from Germany, several of our journals were lost. At last, that mail packet arrived in the States to the Youth Encounter office! In addition to the team's most recent postings, further journals from the team's time in Germany can be found dating from February 12th to April 4th. Thank you for reading!



Kat Goglin

Date: 5/24/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:

Sometimes going home again isn't all that bad...we've made quite a bit of westward progress in the last week; after leaving Maryland our first stop was Johnstown, Pennsylvania. No floods this time around, fortunately, but we did have a good program. Last Thursday, though, was the day I had been waiting for since I found out about it. Before I started on team all these many (okay, three) years ago I was the youth director at Bethany Lutheran Church in Ashtabula, Ohio. On Thursday night we had a program there, and it was my first visit back since I left to start preparing for team. When we came through Ohio in January on our way to New York I had the chance to meet up with one of the families from the church, and that was what sort of set the ball rolling to enable this visit to happen. It seemed that my departure three years ago was under good terms, but in my first year we didn't go back despite Ohio being part of that team's region. I hosted teams about twice a year in my time there but one hadn't visited since a few weeks after I left, so when we got there last week I didn't fully know what to expect. Fortunately, it was great; lots of good reunions, a good program (not our best, but certainly not our worst), a lot of fun and even a few last bits of closure. My one regret was that the time was so short; there overnight and gone, which is supposed to be typical for us but with our schedule has become more rare. Just when I really wanted a one-day visit to be longer...nonetheless, I welcomed the chance to revisit an important part of my life and show what I've been doing with myself for the last few years.



Steve Ellwein

We kept moving quickly after Ashtabula; on Friday we had an evening chapel at a juvenile detention facility in Wabash, IN, then on Saturday the really fun drive came. We were due in Eau Claire, WI, and the most direct route from A to B goes right through downtown Chicago. Of course, I'm not one to resist a challenge like that and Chicago is one of my favorite cities anyway, so I had no problem being the one behind the wheel as we made our way through the Windy City. We didn't even hit bad traffic until a couple of miles outside the very downtown part of the Dan Ryan Expressway and another small jam in the O'Hare area, so we actually made fairly good time and had the chance to stop for supper instead of eating in the van. After Sunday morning services we drove to the Twin Cities; the girls are at Cathleen's house and the guys spent today on things like the Mall of America and fixing the van's side mirror. Tomorrow we get right back on the road, making the first of what will be three trips this summer to Minot after a stop at a camp between Devils Lake and Valley City, ND. We'll also hit Williston in the very northwestern part of the state before continuing on our way west. Oddly enough, I also had interviews for youth ministry positions in Minot and Williston before the connection with Ashtabula came up.

So, even though this is Monday, most of this journal seems focused on last Thursday, and I guess that our time in Ashtabula has occupied the biggest part of my thoughts lately; anticipating it before we went there, enjoying it during the event and reflecting on it afterwards. All of the stages of our lives are important; they're important for the experiences that they are by themselves, and also for the preparation that they give us for what follows. I'd like to think that I was a good youth director overall, but there was certainly a lot more I could have done; God did his work (and is still doing it), but I could have helped out a little more. However, the lessons I learned in Ohio have been very valuable to me in my time with Youth Encounter (and I'm sure there are some people in Ashtabula who are glad that I put those lessons into practice), and my thoughts on that have gone in two directions in the last week. First, we don't often get the chance to go back a stage. Any college

students who have gone back to their high schools, college graduates who have gone back, any people who have moved and gone back to their original hometowns, know that it is good to go back to a familiar place and relive the past a little bit, but it is usually different as well. That's how it should be; as good as one part of our lives may have been, we need to keep moving forward. If we don't, we deny ourselves the opportunities to grow as people and to see what new and different things God has in store for us. I guess that's the second part; Ashtabula prepared me for Youth Encounter, college prepared me for Ashtabula, and you can keep going as far back as you want with the chain. With all that in mind, I can't wait to see what Youth Encounter is preparing me for. So far I have no idea what it is, but I know that God is in control, so I know that it's going to be great. In the meantime, it's also a valuable thing to bring those past stages back every once in a while and remember what was good about them when they were the present. Ephesians 1:11-12, Psalm 40:5

Date: 5/31/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

It's usually a good thing when the return tour involves a little bit of returning...it was a rather light week in the life of Watermark GCR2 (Germany, Czech Republic, Romania), which is a return of sorts in itself; that's right, we're back in our primary region of the Northwest. The week before last we basically crossed half of the country, moving from the Baltimore area to the Twin Cities, and last week we covered most of the other half, ending up in western Idaho. What happened in between was, obviously, a lot of driving, blasting through Minnesota and North Dakota in three days ending with the week's first program in Williston on Thursday; and that was the slow part. On Friday we experienced a nice, long stretch of U.S. Highway 2 and then some, winding up back in our old stomping grounds of Montana, specifically the state capital of Helena. Even though it was only a housing it was a good time; Dave and I stayed with the associate pastor and wound up at "Shrek 2." Highway 2 (at least the parts we've driven on) may leave something to be desired, but the drive south from Great Falls to Helena was very scenic, which we knew would only continue on Saturday as we wound our way along U.S. Highway 12 toward Orofino, Idaho. It's a beautiful drive, a winding river road going through national forest for most of the way. It doesn't have the speed of an interstate, but (besides there being no interstate close by) sometimes that's not what you need.



Steve Ellwein

We're back in Orofino; we visited here in November and it's one of the places during that time where we had a program. That officially makes this church only the third place in our 2-3-week-old "return tour" that we have done some sort of program at a place where we also did a program in the fall (following our departure/return prep church in New York and a school in Maryland). It was good to be back; we've actually managed to rotate our songs, so we were able to give them a new program in that regard, not to mention showing our own slides from overseas in contrast to the slides from previous teams of our fall tour. The program also included a song played and sung with members of the church's youth band, with whom we worked earlier in the day after worship. Today, of course, is our day off, and we're a little independent this time around; we ended up in a hotel instead of the church floor since the Memorial Day weekend made finding host homes difficult. So, some of us headed for the nearest town-of-reasonable-size (Lewiston, 45 minutes away) and I ended up at "Shrek 2" for the second time in a few days, which is okay since it's a very good movie. It's been a light week; I think we could all have done with a little less driving, but we know that traveling nearly 3,000 miles in two weeks was necessary to get us back into our region. For all the driving we were doing we actually had a decent number of programs on the way from New York to the Twin Cities; we're hoping that trend continues now that we are back in the Northwest.

Tomorrow we continue the westward run, spending a night in Hermiston, Oregon before continuing on to the Portland area (probably with another stop at Multnomah Falls, one of my favorite scenic attractions in the U.S.) for two stops. The good news is that out of these three Oregon programs, two are places we have been before. For those who are not familiar with Youth Encounter's international team ministry, this is the part of the year we call the "return tour." The idea of the return tour is that we went to a number of churches and other places during the fall tour, telling about the places we would be going and the ministry we would be doing. We have now had those experiences that at that time were still basically unknown, and during the return tour we return

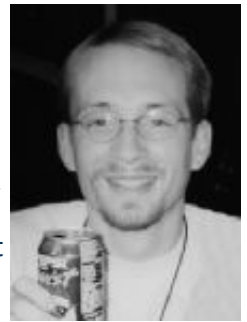
(nice how that works, eh?) to those churches and other places to share those experiences with the people who knew we would be having them. For us part of the problem is that the "number of churches and other places during the fall tour" wasn't all that high, reducing our number of chances for return visits from the get-go, but the return visits are still my favorite part of this portion of the tour. Many of these people have been supporting us financially and through prayer. Some of them have maintained contact with us since our first visit. We have the opportunity to go back, be with some familiar people (and some new ones as well), tell about our experiences to people who have a particular interest in hearing about them, and thank them for their part in helping make it happen for us. Sharing our lives with the people we meet and vice versa, continuing the relationships we have formed, building a sense of global community in the church; to me, these are the types of things that are the heart of international team ministry. I love doing them, I hope we get more chances to do them, and I hope that we as a team and as an organization continue to commit to doing them; 1 Thessalonians 3:6, 11-12

Date: 6/7/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Our loss, heaven's gain...our time in the Portland area started in Hillsboro. Since this booking didn't come in all that long ago we were basically worked into an existing event, which was still fun as we played floor hockey and other games with the church's youth group, also getting a little time to tell them about our experiences overseas. The contact is a Cross Fire alum, and it's nice to have that connection. The other fun part for me was that in his office is a hammered dulcimer. I love that instrument's sound and I would love to learn to play it, but it isn't exactly practical to have one on the road (and I would be worried about putting one into our trailer). But, on Wednesday night and Thursday morning I got to mess around with it a little and didn't end up sounding completely terrible. If I end up in a job that gives me some spare time after this year is over, I just might have to try to pick up another instrument...probably our shortest drive of the year came on Thursday going from one northwest Portland suburb (Hillsboro) to another – Beaverton, one of the sites the team visited before my time with them began (actually, the place they left to go to the airport to get me). We had a Friday morning chapel at the church's school and an evening youth event – after supper and our program, the party moved to a local arcade-fun park type place with mini-golf, bumper boats and that sort of thing (personally, I spent part of the evening re-establishing my skee-ball skills).



Steve Ellwein

Our time going west completed (by virtue of ending up in the ocean if we went much further), we turned north and headed back to the Olympic Peninsula of Washington and the little town of Chimacum. Or Port Hadlock. The booking sheets say different things on different visits, and the church is actually about a half mile outside of each town. In any event, it was our second visit this team year and my fourth once last year is taken into account. I've become about as familiar with this congregation as is possible in four visits (which is much better than our usual total of one) and have loved the experience each time. It's a huge encouragement to me to be with people who we've gotten to know enough to mutually care about each other personally as well as in our roles as "the team" and "the congregation," a theme which I'll probably talk about more in a future journal. We did a program Saturday evening and worship Sunday morning, and the visit was made all too short by needing to move on. Our next stop was another return visit, though – Enumclaw, just southeast of the Seattle-Tacoma area, for a program and today's day off. Dave is off seeing college friends and Pat and Sune went to a Mariners game in Seattle, which leaves me alone at the host home. It's a great way to relax and catch up on a few things, and I also got a little information on some upcoming openings in the Youth Encounter office, which puts a little more definitiveness to my post-team plans in the sense that I at last have something specific to apply for that I know I would enjoy and hope I would be good at. Tomorrow, now that we've done the Great Western Swing, the Great Eastern Swing that will have us back in the Twin Cities for Youth Create in less than two weeks begins as we head to Idaho and then on to Montana.

I had planned to talk about something different in this journal, but I need to write about this subject somewhere. As much as I love the church in Chimacum and the people there, our visit was marred a little for me shortly after our arrival when we were informed of the death of President Ronald Reagan. Nothing at all to do with being where we were and I'm glad I was told about it by someone I knew there rather than a stranger somewhere else, but it took my thoughts away from what we were doing to a degree. Ronald Reagan's presidency roughly coincided with my elementary school years, so my first awareness of national affairs and politics came under his watch. The first political commercial I remember was "it's morning again in America." The first presidential address I remember, as with most people about my age, was his message of hope and comfort following the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. I was profoundly affected by his announcement that he had Alzheimer's, partially because of his importance to my formative years and partially because my grandmother was deep into her own battle with Parkinson's at the time (she'd had it for a few years already and died a little over a year after President Reagan's announcement). For nearly ten years the knowledge that this day was coming has been in the back of my mind; I've been dreading it because it means that a great man is gone from this earth, but in a way I've been waiting for it because it means an end to his suffering (and the lifting of an increasing burden on Nancy, although I'm sure a significant part of her would rather still be bearing that burden). The detached part of me is surprised that this day had been so long in coming. The human part of me mourns for the loss to his family, the nation and world he helped shape, and to myself, but it also rejoices for President Reagan, that his suffering is over and he is with the God he loves so much. When I get to heaven I look forward to seeing him, the strong Great Communicator once more, shaking his hand, thanking him for his impact on me, and joining him in praising the God we both serve. – Matthew 5:14-16 (for President Reagan, who always saw the best in our "shining city on a hill")

Date: 6/14/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

In a ministry with change as one of its hallmarks, it's sometimes nice to find encouragement in the familiar...we're at a pause now in our journey back east. The week began with a night at Shoshone, a base camp of Lutherhaven in northern Idaho, the camp where Dave worked for five summers before coming on team. That, of course, made it a lot of fun for him, but we also got to reconnect with a two-year team alum who had worked there before and was again this summer. It was staff training, and we helped to lead their evening campfire worship. The next day was a long drive, par for the course for us; out of Idaho and over halfway across Montana to Laurel, just west of Billings. We had been there in the fall and I had been there three times with my team last year, making this only the second congregation I have visited five times while on team. I enjoy getting to know people, but here that had already been accomplished so we could move on to more personal connections and simply being comfortable in each others' presence. As enjoyable as all the places we visit are, the nature of this ministry makes that a hard point to reach and it's really a blessing when it happens. A cancellation left Friday open for us, so the church we were booked at for Saturday took us a little early and had us helping out with a "cruise party" at a local assisted living facility. The original church still took us in for housing that night, which started on a bittersweet note with President Reagan's funeral and ended with "The School of Rock."

On Saturday we had a meeting about the week to come and led the evening worship service, which we also did on Sunday morning. (I can't say that Saturday's impromptu sharing was the best I've ever done, but I've been known to have off nights before.) "The week to come"; this week is Vacation Bible School, the first of two for us. Historically international teams haven't really done VBSs; they're more of a Captive Free thing; in fact, they basically take up the Captive Free teams' entire summer; but it's been happening more and more in an apparent effort to fill some of the demand (although the summer team program is restarting for that purpose) and as an easy way to get a week booked. Despite that, we weren't at VBS training, so on Saturday we saw the materials, themes, daily verses, etc. for the first time. We'll be making an effort to work it in as much as we can even though our role in that is limited to music. Yesterday was sort of the opener; not really part of VBS proper, but it was at the site and most of the kids and many of their families were there. The site, interestingly, is a retirement facility. It's a "community VBS," involving four congregations



Steve Ellwein

and open to residents of the facility as well (the daily openings and closings, that is, plus whenever someone wanders by a class, craft, etc.). In addition to the musical openings and closings, for which we're taking some time to add more sing-a-longs to our repertoire, each of us has been placed with a class to stick with for their daily activities. I am in the grade 4-6 class, taught by our contact, who also happens to be a friend from my college days. Today was officially the first day; the VBS continues through Thursday.

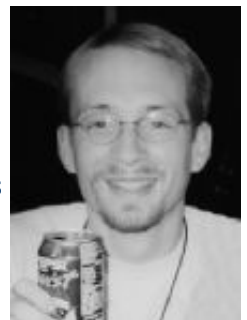
In this moment, my thoughts are more with some of the return visits we have made than with the VBS. Just over a week ago was my fourth visit to Chimacum and a few days ago was my fifth to Laurel. All of the places we visit are wonderful, but as the number of visits to a place start to add up it starts to become more special. The people start becoming more familiar; it was only the third and fourth times I've been at a host family for the fourth time, for instance; and it really starts to feel as if there is mutual ministry going on. As I talked about last week, the concept of "the team" and "the congregation" starts to blur and it starts to feel more like you're going back to visit some friends and tell them about your trip. In turn, they fill you in about what's been going on since the last time you were in town, and it's this beautiful give and take that only repeated contact such as happens on the return tour can help make possible. The place starts becoming more comfortable; not in such a way that you start to slip in your role as a guest (although that's sometimes a side effect, often at the behest of the congregation, contact, host family, etc.), but in such a way of getting a firsthand sense that the body of Christ really is much bigger than one congregation. All the times we saw people like the Paesslers in Germany, and for me all the places in that country I went back to after two years, brought an international scale to that concept for us during our overseas tour. We often hear that we were an encouragement to a congregation, a youth group, etc. after we visit, but I don't know that they realize how much of an encouragement they are to us. The genuine care born of God's love and a relationship built over time is a true blessing to us, one of the main reasons I look forward to the return tour each year, and part of what makes this ministry seem for a while to be less like work and more like family. There are a small number of congregations we have visited that I feel I could belong to (and it's hard to get that sense after just one visit, which helps explain why the number is low); places that have it together, that feel like a true, close family of God; and I've been blessed enough to visit two of them in the last two weeks. Praise God for providing this mutual encouragement; I look forward to more of it as the return tour continues; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, Philemon 1:4-7

Date: 6/21/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

This week I'm learning the differences (and similarities) between being called someplace and being comfortable someplace...from last Sunday to last Thursday we were in Billings (we have now spent more time in Billings alone than we did in Romania) for our first of two Vacation Bible Schools. Now, please forgive the lack of cartwheels, but VBSs aren't exactly my thing. Sure, the kids are cute, and they really (I mean really) get into the sing-a-longs, and our programming is done by lunchtime, but give me high school students any day. High school students I can relate to, have conversations with, be understood by, understand (as much as it is possible to understand teenagers – wow, I sounded old just now). For some reason, it just doesn't work that way with me for the younger ones, and as much as I try, I can't quite work up the same enthusiasm for VBSs that I have for many of the other types of programming we do. That doesn't mean that the week was a total loss for me, though; far from it, and I've found that it's always better to pick out the positive things than complain about the negative ones. So, good things came from VBS, starting with our contact, who was a friend of mine from college days. The two visits (last week and a year ago) that I've made to her church are the only times I've seen her since I graduated, and both times have been good to catch up. Through the week we were split up to each go with a different class between our opening and closing, and I ended up with grades 4-6, the oldest group (except for one day with grade 1). There wasn't really a curriculum for that age level in the materials they used, so Heather (their teacher, our contact, my friend) made up her own, and it was a good chance to explore some different things. Plus, it was a good sized group (about 20) and very energetic. It was also nice to have enough time to meet, learn new sing-a-longs, take care of some team business and that sort of thing while still leaving our evenings free. Thursday rolled around faster than expected, and that



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was our last night in Billings (this time). Friday and Saturday brought a pair of long drives – to Minot, ND and the Twin Cities, respectively, both in the neighborhood of eight hours.

Why the rush to get to Youth Encounter's homeland of the Twin Cities, you ask? We did have Sunday worship at a church in Champlin (very north Minneapolis suburb) where I lived for a few weeks in training my first year (so long ago), but then the other, longer-lasting reason arrived – the long-awaited Youth Create has begun. We've been excited (well, I know I have been) ever since finding out that we would be here this week – partially so we could get a fuller sense of what it's all about and partially because we knew a little about it. Basically, Youth Create is a week-long cross between a camp and a conference for high school students, held at a church in Fridley and focusing on worship and the arts. The students come from across the country and beyond – Florida, Maryland, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Washington by way of Australia – and even at this early stage in the week their passion for God, music and many other things is incredible to me. We met most of the group last night and led a few games to help us get to know each other and build the group a little, including a slightly modified version of Luther Dell's famed Mighty Mighty Scoop Noodle Challenge (modified because we don't have the aforementioned noodles, so drum bags stood in instead). Today was our big day, though – in addition to being the "house band," one of our big purposes in being here is to help the participants develop their skills. Music is a big part of that, of course, but so are a lot of other ways that worship can be done. So, today we led workshops in skits, sharings (the short stories/testimonies that we do), puppets and sing-a-longs. We had been hard at work on these workshops since we decided who was doing what last week, of course...okay, so we mostly winged it, but I think it was still at least somewhat helpful. Since I am the sound tech, I have some additional responsibilities this week, starting today as I kicked off a two-day elective. Part of the afternoons are taken up by electives which are mostly led by the other staff here, but I was tapped to lead one on sound – how the system works, how to run it, etc. I had a 90-minute session today and will have one more tomorrow, and hopefully that can at least scratch the surface because a) what I'm doing is basically a condensed version of the training that team sound techs get (which is condensed enough already), so I hope I'm not trying to squeeze too much in; and b) I want to try to do well since about half of the 30+ participants are at this elective.

This is what I've been anticipating, what I've been hoping for, and it is great so far. I'm working with high school students, I'm talking about sound, we're leading workshops and singing more than just sing-a-longs; I'm definitely much more in my element than I was last week. However, does the fact that I'm more comfortable at Youth Create than at a Vacation Bible School mean that the former is any more my purpose or calling than the latter? Maybe in a general sense of knowing what group I work better with – after all, that's why I was a youth director, not a children's ministry director (more power and much respect to anyone who does or wants to hold that position) – but in the specific sense, I don't think so. I'm called to be part of this team this year, for better or for worse. Some things I'm going to enjoy more than others, some things I'm going to be better at than others, some things I'm going to be more comfortable with than others. That doesn't mean that I'm any more or less called to one thing or another in the context of this year, or that I'm incapable of finding joy at a VBS because there was plenty to be found, or that I'm incapable of struggling at Youth Create because there's been some of that too. Calling is on many of our minds lately – in the free time we have this week, many of us will work on resumes and even have interviews, trying to nail down exactly what it is we'll be doing next year and trying to discern what God's will is in that department. As we search, we focus mostly on things that we are good at and that we think we'll enjoy doing, which is (I think) perfectly natural and acceptable. Having a natural ability for something or being readily comfortable with something may certainly be an indication of calling, and I would certainly think that God would generally want us in a position of doing something we are good at and enjoy, but calling and comfortability are not always one and the same. The times when we are called where we are not comfortable are times when we can experience great growth and an expanding of our horizons, and we can still really enjoy ourselves in the process. But then, it's always good to go back to what feels right, too. I'm grateful that I had the opportunity to have both in this past week; throughout the entire week I was exactly where I was supposed to be. – Exodus 4:10-12, Romans 8:28

Date: 6/28/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

What kind of message do we send even when we're not sending a message? We're on our second westward swing of the return tour, having left the Twin Cities on Saturday following an incredible week at Youth Create. Throughout the entire week we worked with 30-35 high school students and a few other staff members at various sessions and events. A typical day would begin with matins/First Word/morning worship and devotion, followed by a session centered around part of the liturgy of the Lutheran worship service. It usually involved the participants working in small groups to come up with new ways to present the liturgy, and the creativity they displayed was astounding at times – I never would have expected such unique approaches to things like confession, the Creed and even invocation & benediction. The afternoons consisted of electives and some time to rehearse, work on ideas or just jam, and the evenings each had some kind of activity before vespers/Last Word/closing worship and devotion – Monday an art project, Tuesday a coffeehouse (which we weren't around for because Cathleen's family had invited us to their house for the evening), Wednesday our program, Thursday the variety show and Friday the closing worship service. Friday also saw my parents taking us all out to lunch and a show and workshop in improv comedy by Happy Fun Time, who lived up to their name once again. A good number of office staff turned out for the program, and (it seemed) about half of Cathleen's family as well, which made the evening more fun for us. The variety show and worship service were special as well because they were almost entirely conducted by the Youth Create participants, doing what they love to do and utilizing the ideas that had come up throughout the entire week – music, drama, dance, signing and more. They really threw themselves into both projects and it showed; the developing and existing talent was fun to watch, but the real highlight was seeing the devotion of all of these high school students – to their respective crafts (and the ones that emerged) and especially to God. That came up all week – watching the attention paid in something as simple as the sound elective I led, the depth displayed in large group discussions and the small group approaches to the liturgical elements, the thoughtfulness with which the days and the devotions were processed during "family time" at the very end of each day. They also had a great desire to hold onto what they learned and the recharging of their faith over the week, wanting to take both home with them to further the growth and enrichment of their respective youth groups, bands, congregational worship, etc. I'm glad I was able to be a part of Youth Create (especially after marketing it for nearly three years); it was a lot of fun and a needed energy boost for me as well.

We have a few events this summer that involve us staying in one place for a week, and we just came off of two of them in a row, but for this week the driving resumes. We came to Youth Create from Minot, and after we left Youth Create we drove to...Minot, our third visit of the return tour and fourth this year. The difference is that for the first time since the fall tour visit (which technically doesn't even count for me since I wasn't part of the team at that early point) we had programming at the church yesterday. It was a fairly full day, actually, starting with worship in the morning, then a little down time before the beginning of a district youth event. We did a few games at the beginning (to be exact, a little improv borrowed from the Happy Fun Time workshop a few days prior), then it was off to the mini-golf and go-karts before gathering back at the church for the guest speaker, supper and our program. The fact that we had more than one thing in a day took me back a little to overseas, when hours of driving was not a normal part of the routine but we wouldn't bat an eyelash at two programs in a single day. I actually miss that a little – doing ministry, being utilized, etc. – and even if I was the only one I was glad to be a little busy, both yesterday and in the previous week. Today, however, we have our first official day off in three weeks (we didn't get one last week because of Youth Create or the week before because of the VBS – normal for a Captive Free team in summer, not so much for us) and I think we were all glad for it, even if all I accomplished was to check email, do laundry, run some errands and take a really long time to eat lunch. The coming week holds less programming and more driving – tomorrow we journey back to the familiar locale of Montana, specifically Glasgow for two days, and between Thursday and Saturday we need to get from Glasgow in the northeast and Kalispell in the northwest part of the state, and Montana is a large state – almost as big as Germany. How exactly that will happen remains to be seen, but Montana is usually interesting like that.

While we were at Youth Create we had a meeting at the Youth Encounter office about the program we had the night before. We heard some good suggestions, and hopefully took them to heart, about the overall message of the program and the amount of cross-cultural sharing we do during it. We could definitely add more – songs, stories, etc. – and hopefully we'll be finding some ways to do that even in the relatively short amount of time we have left. Whether our program has one overall message or not, we're still sending one, and even if we don't figure out what it is it will still come through. That's true whether we are on stage or not – we are basically always doing programming, and our attitudes and the way we present ourselves during our time between "official" programs or even in our "down time" reflect our message just as much as the programs themselves. When we act (or don't act) from or claim tiredness, when we decide not to take time to improve our program or our team life, it has a negative impact on the message we send. When we work through it, when our interest in others and our ministry to them take precedence over our comfort and doing what we individually want to do all the time, God's love can shine through us and we present a much more positive and unified message. I am convinced that good things happen at our programs and people are touched by them. However, that is not a reason to be content with where we are at, to be satisfied and not strive for more. The cross-cultural aspect of our program is an important one, and one of the most interesting to the congregations we visit. We owe it to them to give the best program we can give, and we owe it to our friends in the Czech Republic, Germany and Romania to give the best and most complete representation of our time there that we can. Beyond that lies the overall message of the program. Each song has a message, each talk we give has a message, the skit and puppet show have a message, how we interact with people (before, during and after programs) has a message, but how do all of those individual pieces come together to form one unified program with one unified message? Assuming we make the time, that's what we'll be working on in the next few weeks, and if you really want to stretch things there's an application for all of us. In programs and in life we are always sending a message. If we take the time to figure out what it is and what we can do to support it, we have more control over the process and it usually comes out better. What message is our team sending? What message am I sending? What message are you sending? – Romans 15:5-6

Date: 7/1/2004

Submitted by: Kat Goglin

Journal Entry:

Hello everyone! Sorry it's been so long in between journals. I thought you might like to know what has been going on with Watermark- Germany! We are in Glasgow, Montana. We had a great time today with our contact Darla Rae and the girls "host mom" Lee Anne. We took Darla Rae's pontoon boat to the lake and had a little adventure. First of all, it was a little colder than it was yesterday and all day the sun was really trying to come out but not really succeeding. Martha, Pat and Cathleen actually went swimming in the freezing cold water, as Sune, Dave and I just sat and watched them from the shore. After lunch it started to rain a little so we decided to head back. But on the way back the boat ran out of gas in the middle of the lake! So Pat, Sune, Martha, Darla Rae, Shawn and I were stuck in the rain in the middle of the lake. Luckily Cathleen and Lee Anne were not with us, they took Lee Anne's car, so they were able to get us some gas, but it was just a crazy day. but a good day. For the first time in a long time most of us were together just doing something fun! It was a blessing and I thank God that we were able to do it! After we got back to the church we hurried up and set up and had an awesome program with the youth. God is so good, and He always gives us what we need!



Kat Goglin

Date: 7/5/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

Is there a difference between being utilized and feeling useful? We've made our way back into Montana, and by the end of this week we will officially have spent more time in this state than in the Czech Republic and Romania combined. The week began with two days in Glasgow, which is a new location for us but also where I spent Thanksgiving 2002 while with New Vision. We actually had a program there on Wednesday, which was acoustic because the sanctuary is on the smallish side. Good thing, too, as the rest of the team had gone off to the lake (say goodbye to our schedule, on a day when we actually had one) and delayed their return to the church until about 20-30 minutes before the program was to begin. On Thursday we made our way south through central Montana, a lonely stretch to say the least, and arrived once again in the great city of Billings for a two-day housing stint courtesy of one of the churches involved in our VBS a few weeks back. Saturday was the drive to our current destination, a camp near Bigfork, which for those familiar with Montana geography as we have come to be is on Flathead Lake near Kalispell. For those not familiar with Montana geography, here are a few facts and figures. Glasgow is in northeastern Montana, not that far (relatively speaking) from the North Dakota border. Billings is in the south central part of the state and Bigfork is in the northwest. According to Microsoft Streets & Trips, Glasgow to Billings is about 278 miles and Billings to Bigfork is 464. Glasgow to Bigfork directly is 426, nearly 40 miles less than the second leg of our journey alone and 316 fewer than our total trip. It's a little far out of the way for housing, but if we're not used to it, it at least doesn't surprise us much anymore. Anyway, we're here at camp and the week of fun has begun.

This week is Trinity's senior high camp, and it's definitely a unique situation. Yesterday was basically the introduction – the campers arrived in the afternoon (we had been part of a worship service at the camp that morning) and after supper we had a short worship service before the campfire, home of our evening songs & devotions time. We had thought that we would basically be doing music in the morning before the large group session and campfire in the evening, but as it turns out we'll also be in groups of two (two of us or one of us and a counselor from the camp; I'm with Kat) to co-lead small group sessions. In other words, it's basically the same as last year. Yep, I was at this camp last year as well (and did enjoy myself despite the sleeping, or lack thereof, arrangements), and as always a frightening number of the campers remember me. I should be used to it by now, but I still don't see how I'm that memorable; just another reminder of the powerful impact of our ministry and how we leave lasting impressions on those we meet. We always have to be watching ourselves (even in situations when we think no one's around, especially during a week like this when we basically have no privacy in an even deeper way than usual) because our attitudes and how we conduct ourselves will be the source of those impressions – whether they're good or bad, those impressions will be what people remember of us and associate with teams and Youth Encounter.

One of the biggest struggles that a teamer faces – at least that this teamer faces – is finding a place to feel useful. It's the same questions as starting a new school, job, or anything like that – what is my role here? Where do I fit in? On team we know what our main musical roles are and what our team jobs are, but the questions of our places in the social circle that is a team and our contributions to the many non-musical areas of our ministry remain. It's surprising how much it happens, even 11 months into the year. We've been going through it as a team as well, especially in times like this when we have spurts of above-normal activity like a VBS, Youth Create or this camp bracketed with periods of virtually no activity, only driving and housing like most of the past week. We're on this team to do ministry, and in a perfect situation we would be doing that – a program every night, worship on Sunday, day off on Monday. When we have so many housings, so many times of just visiting a place and (it seems at first glance) taking advantage of people's hospitality, it makes us question whether we are being useful out here. That's where the distinction between useful and utilized comes in. In the lean times we are indeed not being utilized all that much – we aren't being put in a position to share our ministry in the form of programs. We can still be useful, however – there is ministry even in housings to our host homes, and even when we're

on church floors when people at those churches see that we're willing to do that (or at least accepting of it) as a part of this year to which we have committed ourselves. We have to be willing to take advantage of those opportunities to be useful even when we're not being utilized, but they're out there. I have no idea what the connection is between that and the more individual stuff before it, but both are just part of what's been running through my head as we travel. The touring part of our ministry only has about a month left – let's make sure that we are as useful as possible.
– 1 Peter 3:15-17, Ephesians 4:11-13

Date: 7/12/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

Being satisfied isn't always a good thing...we are now at the conclusion of our camp experience (well, this camp, anyway). A typical day at senior high camp started off with breakfast, followed by morning devotions which consisted of music by us and a brief talk by Ryan, our resident speaker/leader for the week. After a quick break Ryan introduced a Bible study in the large group and we then broke into our small groups for more discussion. The theme for the week was "I AM" – who God is, who in turn we are in Christ and how we can live in that knowledge were some of the topics that we explored. I have to say that on the first day I was impressed with the group that Kat and I led; everyone in the group participated and they really put some thought into the questions and their answers to them. By that time we were ready for lunch, and then we would squeeze in a short meeting as a team (about 20-30 minutes, which constituted the bulk of our time away from the campers since they were having quiet time in their bunks) before gathering back for either large group game time or small group activity time, which happened twice and involved the planning of skits around a particular theme or concept. Kat might be lamenting that we won't win any Oscars or Emmys for our work, but it was out of those skits that the legend of the "Venison Slurpees" (our small group name; see Five Iron Frenzy's "Oh, Canada" for the reference) was born. The late afternoon was basically a long block of free time – sadly not waterfront time since it rarely got much above 70 degrees all week, so swimming really only happened once – which was also used for organized tournaments in everything from active sports like volleyball and basketball to semi-active ones like horseshoes and ping-pong to basically sedentary (thanks for the word, Lisa) ones like chess and checkers. Supertime, more free time, then some sort of evening activity preceded the campfire (music by us, talk by Ryan) that closed the day. The evening activities changed with the day – a coffeehouse/talent show, Underground Church (a variant of Romans & Christians), a scavenger hunt and of course our program. On Wednesday we were to have climbed Big Mountain, but the cold weather put a stop to that as well so we ended up spending the afternoon bowling. We atoned for that on Friday after camp had ended by going a little north to Glacier National Park and climbing Avalanche Trail. Low amount of team and alone time notwithstanding, it was a great week overall – familiar faces, some new ones, a routine wildly different from the norm for us but one I remembered enough to settle right into, great messages, responsive campers who a) contributed to the discussions and b) already knew just about every sing-a-long we did and participated enthusiastically. Even though I'm not exactly the world's greatest outdoorsman and I don't know if I could do it for an entire summer, I do enjoy the camp environment, and of course I like working with the senior high age group, so for the second year I can say that part of me was sorry to see the week end.



Steve Ellwein

Part of that, of course, is that it means we're back to driving, which I love when I'm actually the one behind the wheel but is a little more taxing the other three-fourths of the time. We had thought Bigfork represented the westernmost point of our second western swing, but we went a little farther on Saturday to Pullman, WA, just over the border with Idaho (the guys' host home is actually in Moscow, ID, but only about 15 minutes from the church). One morning service was all we had yesterday, then we apparently couldn't wait for our day off because the rest of the day was spent in various relaxed pursuits – shopping, reading, phone calls, hanging out on the lawn, catching up on some work (okay, maybe that was just me), etc. From that description it may be hard to believe, but today is actually the day off, which I am celebrating in traditional style by sleeping until lunchtime and not accomplishing much more after that. Our hosts have an extensive book

collection and I found a copy of "The Princess Bride," so I've been reading that to see how it compares to the movie version (some subtle changes, and of course the book contains more than the movie does, but fairly close overall). It's made me realize that leisure reading is something I haven't done in quite a while (I can't do it in the van), and I hope to get more chances once this year is over. Tomorrow the work week begins anew, but I use that term loosely since we don't know quite what's going on yet. We know that somehow we'll be making our way across southern Idaho because we need to be in Wyoming by Saturday, but we have only the vaguest idea of the specifics (you know, the little things like where exactly we're going, whether we have programming or not, stuff like that), which I guess doesn't make them that specific at all.

One of the easiest traps to fall into on team is to think that no programming equals no work, and with all the housing nights we've had, that trap has been wide open for us on many an occasion. I wish I could say that it's just typical of the part of the year we're in – almost done, looking toward the end – and to some extent it is, but I'm afraid it goes beyond that. It's convenient to blame it on our booking situation, but that's only one factor as well. We've had a lot of goals this summer – some that we made ourselves, some given to us by the office – and right now we're looking at a lot of unmet goals. Parts of our program that we wanted changed are the same way they were in May, or in some cases September. We've learned and recorded one cross-cultural song to leave for the next team, having identified three that we wanted to work on and get in the program and recorded. Out of 14 new songs we wanted to have learned, 6 have been requested and 3 learned. You haven't seen our second newsletter yet despite a June 20 deadline, which is not indicative of slowness on the part of the office; it's just that none of us have quite turned them in yet. Journals, for the most part, have been weekly instead of three times a week, and only recently have they even been that. I don't think we've completed a round of one-on-ones since we've been back in the U.S. – last week we had our first one since the beginning of June. Yesterday we had literally the entire day available to us after one worship service to do – well, anything, really – and we did absolutely nothing as a team, taking time instead to relax and run personal errands and all the things that could just as easily have been done today, our actual day off. Programmatically, relationally, in the way we fill (or don't fill) our schedule and in the technical details of this ministry which are still ministry themselves, it sometimes seems like we have gotten into a mode of doing the minimum necessary to get by, at least in the areas we can't ignore. People still enjoy our programs and our visits, but we could be doing and giving so much more, and if we don't show that to people they may not even know what they're missing out on. I'm all for relaxing and taking time to recharge, but sometimes it seems like that's all we do even in the face of things that need to get done. When we have nothing scheduled we complain about that and when we have things to do we complain about what a burden they are. Most of us say we want to keep improving ourselves as a team and end on a strong note, but most of the time it feels like we're apparently satisfied with where we are at and words do not translate into action.

I debated for quite a while whether I should include all of this in a journal since much of it seems negative, harsh or unfair on the surface. It's included for a number of reasons: 1) it's true. 2) It's a big part of what I have been thinking about lately. 3) I'm not exempting myself from any of it. 4) Team life just isn't always all sweetness and light, and a big part of that is what teams do to themselves. If you're on team now or will be going on team in the future (and I guess this is good general advice for those not on team as well), work hard to develop good habits from the beginning. Stay on top of things and stay committed to doing the "little things" that need to be done as well as the things that keep you strong and unified as a team. Keep working to improve yourself as a person and as a team; even when you don't think there's time or when you're a little tired, it still needs to be done. Recognize and be thankful for the good things that do happen as a result of God working through you in your ministry, because by God's grace you will still be a blessing whether it's because of or despite your efforts, but don't rest on those things. Don't be satisfied with or resign yourself to the way things are when you know more is possible (and all things are possible with God) and don't give up; keep persevering in your ministry and in doing your part to help make it all God wants it to be. Enjoy what you're doing, but never stop striving for more. God delights in and always gives his best for us; let's do the same in return. – 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Date: 7/19/2004
Submitted by: Steve Ellwein
Journal Entry:



Steve Ellwein

Not much to talk about this week, which is probably a problem for a weekly journal. We've gone from Sunday worship to Sunday worship with nothing scheduled in between except a whole lot of housing. From Pullman to Boise...housing. Now, the fun feature about this is that it was the first time in 24 days that we only spent one night in a particular location. Forget what you've heard about "a program in a new town every night" – we're in the Northwest. From Boise to a camp 40 miles north of Ketchum and Sun Valley in south central Idaho...housing, two nights. This fun feature deserves its own paragraph, so more on that later. From camp to Idaho Falls...housing. On the bright side, Idaho Falls and Boise were both actually return visits, so we saw some familiar faces even if it was only in our conversations that we could share our overseas experiences with them. We did, of course, receive the line we've heard a few times already this year – "if we'd been called sooner, we could have organized a program." From Idaho Falls to Lander, Wyoming – Sunday worship in Lander preceded by...housing. A good chunk of this was a scenic drive; our route took us right by the Grand Tetons, and we stopped for a while at a visitors' center so we could get a good view without actually going into the park. So, there you have it – seven days with absolutely nothing on the schedule. I'm sure it's happened before, but even with the year we've had so far (at least in the U.S.) it's kind of amazing to think about. It gets even stranger when contrasted with our overseas schedule that sometimes took us to two or even three places in a day. Return tour, Northwest style...

Okay, so I said the camp story deserved special mention. We were booked at this camp on Monday for a Wednesday arrival. Turns out that the camp is willing to house us, but they're basically full with a junior high group. So, they improvise and decide to pitch a couple of tents for us to sleep in for two nights. Let me emphasize – none of this is meant to reflect badly on the camp. They did the best they could with the notice they were given. Anyway, we get there and find the tents. The one for the guys is about big enough for 3 1/2 of the 4 mattresses in it and has a partially collapsed side, and the one for the girls is actually a dining tent (a tent you would put over a picnic table); neither tent has a nylon "floor" or a rain fly. After a brief decision process, two opt to brave the tents, three (myself included) go to the dining hall despite a 6 a.m. arrival by the kitchen crew to start preparing breakfast and two end up sleeping in the van. The van. Over the last three years one of my joking responses to questions about where we stay on the road has been "none of us have slept in the van yet." I can't truthfully say that anymore, and the written word of this journal cannot reflect my wonderment and incredulity at that situation. On night 2 at the camp, the count became two in the van and five in the dining hall as a storm had previously demolished one of the tents and soaked the ground, including the ground the tents were on since they had no floors or rain flies. Again, please don't form a bad opinion of the camp based on our housing experience. From our time there we could easily see that it's a great place where deep bonds are formed thanks to enthusiastic campers and genuinely caring counselors and staff. We offered to help with worship on our first night there, ended up doing the whole thing and got a terrific response from people to most of whom we were total strangers minutes before the service began. Some of us attended their variety show and closing worship on our second night there (okay, they were in the dining hall, a.k.a. my bedroom, but I honestly would have gone anyway) and had a wonderful time there as well; it was actually the most I've enjoyed worship in a while. Again, it's a great place and in the final analysis I'm glad we went; I just wish that we could have been scheduled to do something more than coming up with something on the spot or had our housing scheduled with enough advance notice for them to have been able to work something out. It was an unfortunate situation for us and them, which makes it even more fortunate that God works in all situations.

We're still in Wyoming – after Lander we headed to nearby Riverton and had our first normal evening program since 10 days prior at camp in Montana (so the first in a church since 18 days prior). After such a drought we almost didn't know what to do with ourselves having two things in a day. That quickly subsided as we headed into today, our day off. I've been spending the day reading,

watching movies and catching up on work – most of it with a cat on my lap, which generally makes all things better. Our last trek east begins soon; by Saturday we will be in Iowa City, so it's fortunate we made some progress in that trip yesterday by going the half hour from Lander to Riverton. I know there are things I probably don't understand about our schedule. Okay, I know there are things I definitely don't understand; a better way to say it would be that there are things I probably don't know about. I really want to know those things so I can understand more, but no one seems willing or able to explain it in a way that doesn't raise more questions. Last week and this week are being booked at the last minute – sometimes as little as one or two days' notice, so little hope for programs – but one of our June housings had been booked since March, when there would have been plenty of time to find a place for a program. In fact, we were out of the country for four months, but when we came back we had almost as many holes in our summer schedule as when we left. It's not the cause of all our problems, but I think some of our own scheduling problems and frustrations would be lessened if we had a more normal (for Youth Encounter) schedule to follow. Good things have happened just about everywhere we've been, and I know God has a purpose for everywhere we go, but between paying for gas to go from housing to housing and not receiving offerings because we don't have programs, we're really reinforcing our non-profit status. It's not at all about money (although it's admittedly helpful in the "keeping the organization viable" department); we all enjoy the programs we do and we would love to do more of them. So, even though it's basically too late for us – what's going to be set has probably been set, not much can be added and our tour ends in three weeks anyway – I can still make this appeal for the future. If you think your church might be interested in hosting a team, or if you know of another church in your area that might be interested, please, please call Youth Encounter at (651) 287-9688 or (800) 659-6884 and ask about booking a team. The process of booking next year's teams is (hopefully) already underway; they hit the road in mid-late September. There are eight Captive Free teams and five international teams (Cross Fire, Kindred, New Dawn, New Vision and Watermark) who need places to go and things to do, and the staff at Youth Encounter can let you know which teams are traveling in your region and when they are available. They do evening programs (like a concert with some extra elements), worship services, youth nights, lock-ins, retreats, school chapels, nursing home programs, juvenile detention center programs, Vacation Bible Schools, workshops and just about anything else you or your church can think of for them to do. Please call or encourage your church (or any other church) to call; the booking staff at Youth Encounter would welcome the help and next year's teams will thank you. – Romans 1:8-12

Date: 7/26/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

A lot of the Northwest has started to feel like home, but now some of us are actually coming home...we left the Northwest for good (as a team, at least) last Wednesday. We stayed an extra day in Riverton, Wyoming, skipping our church-floor housing in Laramie by majority decision, so it was kind of a long drive to Paxton, Nebraska. Still, it was a pretty good drive – most of it was along the historic Oregon Trail, and we made quick stops at Fort Laramie in Wyoming and Chimney Rock in western Nebraska. I had to resist the urge to stop and hunt even though our pace was strenuous and our rations were meager, and we had to make sure nobody ended up with dysentery, but fortunately we were able to caulk the van and float it when necessary. (For those who weren't in school in the late 80s or early 90s – see, there was this old-school computer game called "Oregon Trail," and two of the stops were Fort Laramie and Chimney Rock, and you could hunt and set your pace & rations and sometimes the people in your group got sick or you had to decide how to cross a river or...oh, never mind.) We made it to Paxton and watched a huge storm roll in right as the program was starting, but it didn't dampen our spirits – it was the first time we've had two evening programs in a four-day span in three weeks. From Paxton we crossed most of the rest of Nebraska for housing in Elkhorn, located just west of Omaha; it was our first visit to the church but my third, so it was good to see some familiar faces.



Steve Ellwein

As we drove to Elkhorn on Thursday our Friday location was still unknown, so when the message came through that another church-floor housing was in our future we made some quick calls and

ended up going to Iowa City a day early. We rolled in on Friday, met late on Saturday (of course; it is us, after all) and got ready for our evening worship service. After the service and dinner we were basically free, so the guys switched host homes (our Saturday-Monday home couldn't take us on Friday) and then met early on Sunday for our two worship services, the first of which started at 8 a.m. It always seems early to me, but I've also been in churches that have a 7:45 a.m. service. There was no Sunday evening program, so we rolled right into our day off and here we are again, wandering the mall and trying to catch up on some work. I've actually been doing a little reading as well, which doesn't normally happen – a book about an American president who becomes a Christian believer while in office and how his policies and the country change because of it, interwoven with scenes from the lives of his siblings and their families. It's a good book, and of course I've forgotten the name of the author so I can't give all the information to recommend it, but it's called "The President." It's got a lot of good stuff on the Christian foundations of our country and how the First Amendment was never meant to separate church and state but protect the former from the latter and prevent the establishment of a particular sect or denomination as the country's official church. It's an interest of mine that hasn't really come up much, so I like to go back to it every once in a while.

On Tuesday we head northwest to Algona, and on Wednesday we go the same direction to Sioux Falls (also a day early), where we will be until Saturday morning. We're going to my church, and we're currently at Martha's church in Iowa City. There's always something a little special about being at a church you know. That takes on many different forms, as I've discovered over the last three years through my evolving definition of "familiar." Sometimes it's as simple as going back to a church that we visited in the fall, one of my favorite and one of the most important parts of our return tour. Even with one prior visit I can usually remember things like where to plug in when we set up, where the bathrooms are and all the other little things that I typically didn't think about when I was at one church on a regular basis. I also can remember a few people, even if it's as few as the contact and the host families, and we know that anyone who was there the first time is probably interested to hear how our overseas experience went. In my case, by virtue of having been to some churches in previous years I've had the opportunity to make some third (like Elkhorn), fourth or (in two cases) fifth visits, which is getting close to the number of times I've been to my own church over the last year. None of those, of course, are quite as familiar as going to your own church, which Martha is currently experiencing and I will experience in a few days. It's not quite the same – after all, you're still "on team" and have some obligations associated with that – but being in a familiar environment with familiar people, sharing with them in some small way what you've been doing for the last year (or three), is a great feeling. I've been getting more and more excited for it as the days go by, which makes me wonder why my excitement doesn't always increase as exponentially for something else. This life, this world, will be over soon, and when that happens I'll be in God's presence forever – an eternal home that is more "home" than anywhere in this temporary world. I pray that our anticipation for that can continue to grow even more than our anticipation for these earthly visits. It's going to be good to be home later this week, but it's going to be even better to be home forever. – 1 Corinthians 13:12; John 15:19, 17:16

Date: 7/29/2004

Submitted by: Pat Torbit

Journal Entry:

Thursday July 29th 2004

Sioux Falls, S.D.

I went on-line tonight and saw that Bjorn Peterson of the international team, New Dawn had posted a journal more recently than myself, so I knew that I had to be getting pretty bad at posting these - so I figured I would type a couple words real quick. We are in Sioux Falls, hometown of Steve Erwin, 300,000 others and Kara from this years Northeast Captive Free team. We have kinda just been chillen here. Tonight Martha, Sune and myself went out with Kara. We hit up a Christian coffee house downtown, and played the game Cranium. The fellaz won on the famous person charade John Travolta, not to be confused with John



Pat Torbit

Foster, the rapper on Watermark Denmark. After that we went our own ways, and the 3 of us headed back to our host family. We got back and saw that the Orioles beat the Yankees, and that we had missed John Kerry speak at the democratic national convention. I need to be careful, "democrat" is a sensitive word amongst the watermark Germany team. However as the year of ministry with watermark draws to a close, some of us are counting down the days and some of us aren't. But in all reality we have 16 days left. (I'm one of the ones counting down). 2 years of my life, coming to close... a beginning, and a continuation. Two years ago I would have never thought I would be where I am at right now. I have met thousands of people, stayed at hundreds of homes, been to over 15 states, seen 5 different countries. I've partnered in ministry with thousands, 10 people on a constant basis for the past 2 years. I've met and been with some friends for life, and I've also met and been with some people who I unfortunately may never see or talk to again in this life. I have met and stayed with host family's who forever will be planted in my heart. So many experiences. It's been a roller coaster ride with ups, downs, straights and YE term = "differences". God has truly revealed himself to me through many people and places over the past two years and while the ministry with team is coming to close for 80 some individuals this year, the ministry continues. It continues with YE, the organization, and with the 80 individuals going our own ways. For me, I feel like these past two years have been a prerequisite... a learning experience for the ministry. Thanks to all my sponsors over the past two years - thank you so much for supporting this ministry and me - Thanks to all the friends, and family's - Thanks to all my family - thanks Dad, Mom, Allison and Coco - even though I think you would adopt a couple of the watermark Denmark or captive free members and send me packing next year.. thanks for your love to me and to all and your continued support of YE and me - Alli, it's amazing how God works - thanks for everything - most of all, thanks for your love - I'm out - thanks to all - take care -

God's Peace -

pat

Date: 8/2/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

The normal weekly update will come in next week's journal, and you'll see then why I can compact two weeks into one entry. For now, over the last month I've kept coming back to something that happened in early July back at camp in Montana, and I'll try to share it with you the best I can. The words and situations have become paraphrased simply by virtue of the exact words being lost to my fading memory, but hopefully it will come across for you like it did for me. On the last night of camp we had a really long campfire, the centerpiece of which was a time for the campers to share stories from their lives and reflections on the week. Among the many things shared, one of the girls told a sad story and sat back down in tears. She was comforted by one of the campers sitting next to her, an exchange student from Turkey who was one of the camp's newest arrivals. One of the counselors remarked that the stars were out in full force that night, something she would never see where she was from in the Chicago area. A little later, one of the guys got up. Now, it's with a certain amount of pride (as though I had anything to do with it, which I didn't) that I say that this guy had been in my small group throughout the week.



Steve Ellwein

He was one of the quieter ones during the week – still contributing, but in a more laid-back way than some of the others; I was actually a little surprised that he was getting up to share. He said he didn't have anything profound to say, but those kinds of disclaimers sometimes prove to be not so true. He had been wondering about his purpose in being there that week, or why anyone was there that week, or why anyone was there at all. Then he started noticing the little moments that were going on around him. Maybe, he said, this week came together and happened the way it happened so a guy from Turkey could give a comforting hug to a girl from Montana. Maybe it was so a girl from Chicago could see the stars for the first time. Maybe God likes to give us those little things every once in a while that may not be huge and life-changing, but they still make us happy, and maybe

sometimes that's enough.

There were a lot of stories shared that night – tales of sorrow and joy, of struggles endured and struggles that are ongoing. God is working in powerful ways in the lives of these senior high campers, and there are forces at work trying to counter that as well. I appreciated all the stories, but that one stuck with me and was actually one of the highlights of my week. I'm sure I got significant parts of it wrong (I really should have written about it sooner), but I pass on what I can remember to you. Through all the troubles of being a "counselor" and not getting much time off, through all the joys of being back at that camp and having great campers, maybe my purpose in being there that week was to hear that reminder to notice and take joy in the little moments. Maybe the purpose in me not writing about the past week was so I could finally share this story, incomplete as it may be after a month. Maybe it brightened your day a little, and maybe, in this moment, that's enough. – 1 Kings 19:11-12, Matthew 21:16

Date: 8/9/2004

Submitted by: Steve Ellwein

Journal Entry:

How are we making use of the time we have? We're back in the North Central region, meaning we're a little busier. Our time in North Central began with three days in Sioux Falls – it was great to be home and to spend some time at my church, although the visit always seems too short when it comes time to leave. Friday was our day of programming, and we were busy for a good portion of the day. The junior high event lasted for three hours and became a test of our improvisational skills when we found ourselves working with a total of four youth. Normally our youth event programming is based on larger groups, so we stretched some things out, made up a few things on the spot (hence the triumphant return of foursquare and improv comedy) and made it work. After supper came the program, and after the program came the beginning of the senior high lock-in. We did some games, Kat did a short workshop and then we had some "closing" worship before we headed back to our host homes (or, in my case, home). It was an earlier night for us than a lock-in would normally have been since we had a drive and program the next day, taking us back into Minnesota for good to the little town of Cleveland. It's only about six miles from St. Peter, so we stopped for lunch and did our team meetings on the Gustavus campus. It was the usual routine of a Saturday evening program and Sunday morning worship (which actually isn't all that routine for us – it was the first time in eight weeks unless you count two instances of Saturday evening worship services), but things were a little different since their building project was nearly complete and we were in a totally different sanctuary than when we visited in the fall. (This church was actually a fourth visit for me; on my first visit in the fall of 2002 the project had just been voted on, and in the not quite two years since I've basically seen it happen in stages.) The evening program was a return to Plainview near Rochester, which was the day off destination of choice for most of us, and it was on the way there that the final week of our tour took a dramatic turn.



Steve Ellwein

We had been scheduled to end last week with a four-day Vacation Bible School in northern Minnesota, but the church ended up canceling. Rather than be housed at that church, we arranged some housing in the Twin Cities area, so the past week looked very different for us. We still went to a retirement home in Waconia (our second visit, my fourth) last Tuesday. It was a little different from the last visit in that they opened it up to some other parts of their complex, so instead of our usual 20-30 residents there were more like 150. That's right, one of the most-attended events of our return tour aside from worship services and it's at a retirement home; the irony of it somehow made it even more fun. We still went to a church in north Minneapolis on Wednesday for a program in the parking lot – our first outdoor program since Romania. (The retirement home program was supposed to be outdoors, but afternoon rain forced a change in plans.) The difference was that instead of then proceeding to the VBS, the Wednesday program was the last of our tour. With one last gasp of effort we got our "vital" team business accomplished on Thursday, then we were off – Dave to his grandfather's house, the girls to Cathleen's house and the other guys to Cathleen's

aunt's house, although with Pat's girlfriend in town we haven't really seen much of him. At any rate, our tour ends as much of it took place (at least in the U.S.) – with housing – and the last few days have basically served as days off before we roll in to debriefing.

I can't speak for what everyone has been doing, but I've actually managed to fill the days rather well, or at least the evenings. Thursday I went to a Bible study regularly attended by some past teammates and other Youth Encounter-related friends, which in addition to being a lot of fun was the first actual Bible study I've been part of in over a year. Even though I didn't get supper until after 11 p.m. (the result of driving from north Minneapolis to the northwestern suburb of Maple Grove to drop off Dave, across the Cities to our host home in the southeastern suburb of Eagan, back to Columbia Heights in the northwest for the Bible study, all but the tail end of which was deep into rush hour) and didn't get back until close to midnight, the worship and fellowship were well worth it. Friday I checked another item off my Youth Encounter to-do list by going to the closing program of this year's Side by Side crews. Side by Side is a three-week program in which participants do work projects with local people in a developing culture and in the process form relationships and take part in that culture. This year's crews shared stories, songs and videos from their experiences in Belize, India, Kenya and Tanzania. A few team alumni were on some of the crews, and it sounded like everyone had an impacting experience. Saturday I checked out the Luis Palau festival, a two-day event (Saturday and Sunday) happening on the Capitol grounds in downtown St. Paul. Palau is an Argentina-born evangelist who is known worldwide, and I was one of about 80,000 people who came that day to hear him speak along with some music by (in the time I was there) gospel singer Hezekiah Walker and pop singers Stacie Orrico and Point of Grace. (I think one of Sune's highlights, though, was arriving in time to hear Jump5 sing "God Bless the U.S.A.") They were all good, but I wanted to see the Sunday lineup of Casting Crowns, Tobymac and Third Day. I couldn't, however, because I was already committed to a different concert Sunday evening. Sune, Martha and I went to a little music cafe in downtown Minneapolis for an evening with the Mutual Admiration Society. The MAS consists of Glen Phillips from Toad the Wet Sprocket, Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones, Elvis Costello drummer Pete Thomas, Dan Wilson and the trio of Chris Thile and Sara & Sean Watkins, collectively known as Nickel Creek. It was primarily Nickel Creek that we went to see, but everyone was terrific. I could fill a few more pages with comments and observations from this concert, so if you want to know more you'll just have to ask.

So now, here we are at the end of the tour. Shortly after I finish typing this entry we will cross the Cities one more time. Our year will end where it began – in New Brighton, home of the first week of training and home this week of debriefing, the process of tying up any loose ends, watching programs and tracking each other's progress through the year, preparing to re-enter the real world (or in three cases, myself or anyone on my team not included, preparing to go on team again) and generally celebrating a year well done, culminating in Saturday's Homecoming celebration in Golden Valley. My third debriefing brings with it the usual array of reactions. Part of me is sad to see the year come to a close as our team goes our separate ways. Part of me is glad to be done (a bigger part than in years past, which I don't think is an entirely unhealthy thing). Part of me is nervous for our team meeting times, not knowing what hidden or buried issues might come up, but part of me looks forward to seeing those issues resolved or at least discussed. Part of me is wondering what will come next (after I volunteer at training for next year's teams, of course). Part of me is excited to see the other teams and their programs, even though that means it's the last time I'll see many of them as well. And of course, part of me is looking not forward but back on the year gone by, trying to start the process of processing, figuring out what exactly this year has meant to me and how it has affected me as a person and in my relationship with God. That's something that will take time to unravel, more time than would make it possible to talk much about it here. For now, despite the difficulties, despite the dramas, despite the fact that our year (especially the U.S. part) could have been much more in terms of what was made available to us and what we made available to ourselves, it's been a good year. We've had some great experiences both overseas and in the U.S., and we've been blessed beyond our wildest imaginations. I can only hope that when others look back on this team, they'll remember a good group of people and a good concert, but more importantly that they'll remember a message about a God who loves us, died & rose for us, wants us to live for him and worship him, and is bigger than any divide caused by geography, language, culture or anything else. Thank you to all who have stuck with me and this team, supporting us

financially, prayerfully or just through reading these journals in the last year, and in the last three years. You're a part of this ministry too, and it continues for you just as it continues for me even after this year ends in five short days. There's ministry to be done everywhere and we're all called to it, whether it takes us thousands of miles away or no farther than our own backyards. Wherever it takes you, God will be there, rejoicing in all that you do for him and simply in who you are in him. After three years in Youth Encounter team ministry and all that has come before and will come in the future, that "well done" is more than enough. – Zephaniah 3:17
